

SKILLS SPECIAL BACKPACKER®

GET OUT MORE

Join
NATIONAL
SUMMIT DAY
August 3

Top
Stargazing
Campsites
PAGE 94

How to Do Everything Better

100 Skills All Hikers Should Know

INSIDER'S
GUIDE
GLACIER
NATIONAL PARK

RANGER
CONFIDENTIAL
WHAT COMES AFTER
BACKCOUNTRY GLORY?

TESTED
BOOTS, STOVES,
PADDLING GEAR

BEST OF
SUMMER

PERFECT
WEEKENDS

SWEET
SWIMMING
HOLES

81 TRAILS &
TRIP IDEAS





Cabela's

basspro.com | cabelas.com

NEW! ASCEND® RATTLESNAKE 55L

Take your time. Take your gear. Pack it all for the long haul. Find your spot and stay as long as you like. 3,356 cubic inches lets you pack your tent, sleeping bag, hiking poles, jackets, cooking gear, food and anything else you might need for an extended vacation off the grid. Adjustable suspension system and padded shoulder straps and hip belt deliver a comfortable, custom fit. One day or three days—grab your gear, find your escape. **YOU DON'T NEED DEEP POCKETS, THIS PACK HAS PLENTY.**



75

Buttermilk Falls, Maine

Features

65

SUMMER!

It's prime time out there, so get after it with 50 adventures guaranteed to make this your best hiking season ever. *By Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan*

81

EPITAPH IN THE SKY

Officially, Mt. Morgenson is unnamed. Unofficially, it's a 13,920-foot granite memorial, and rangers are climbing it to pay tribute to one of their own. *By Eric Blehm*

94

LOST IN SPACE

We give you the moon and the stars with these 10 dark-sky destinations sure to light up your night. *By William M. Rochfort, Jr.*

SKILLS SPECIAL

103

YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG

From tying your boots to crossing a river, there are a lot of ways to bungle basic hiking and camping skills. Here's a better plan for 100 essential tasks. *By Peter Moore*

44



46



54



Play List

14 VIEWFINDER
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CA
Wander among Ice Age remnants in uncrowded Dana Meadows.

16 LIFE LIST
TIMBERLINE TRAIL, OR
Circle Mt. Hood on this classic route.

18 INSIDER'S GUIDE
GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MT
Find solitude in the Crown of the Continent with tips and trips from a local.

20 VIEWFINDER
BLACKWATER FALLS STATE PARK, WV
See the best of this gorge on three hikes that go low, high, and everywhere in-between.

22 DONE IN A DAY
FIRE TOWER HIKES
Score big views on these four treks to lookouts.

23 THE EXPERIENCE
MAINTAINING TRAILS
Give back to the wild lands you love by putting in some sweat equity.

24 VIEWFINDER
NORTH CASCADES, WA
Tick off a 43-mile epic.

26 PERFECT WEEKENDS
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDES
Camp in a glacial cirque in Sequoia National Park, trek through a prairie 30 minutes outside the Twin Cities, find beach solitude in New York, and savor Olympic National Park's best season.

34 GEOPINION
SIGNS OF THE TIMES
Adding more trail markers to the CDT will protect it.

Skill Set

39 ADVENTURE U
LEARN TO CANOE CAMP
Glide into summer with these paddling tips.

42 PASS/FAIL
BLISTER-FREE HIKING
Do stream crossings and wet shoes always decimate your feet?

44 BOOT CAMP
STOP, DROP, AND ROLL
Speed post-hike recovery with a water bottle, a ball, and these simple massage techniques.

46 TRAIL CHEF
PEANUT BUTTER RECIPES
Discover three delicious new spins on this trail staple.

48 TRAIL CRAFT
KNOT TYING
Master a trio of essential backpacking knots and hitches.

50 OUT ALIVE
FLASH FLOOD
A tropical adventure turns disastrous for one pair of hikers.

Field Test

53 SHAKEDOWN
MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS
Crush alpine objectives with supportive and grippy footwear.

58 THE KIT
PADDLING
Get the products you need to float safely in the backcountry.

60 ROUNDUP
CANISTER STOVES
Upgrade your camp kitchen with an ultralight cooker.

62 TRAIL MIX
Our staff's latest picks

In every issue

8 EDITOR'S NOTE
10 TRAILCHAT
120 UNCOVERED

ON THE COVER Cecil D. Andrus-White Clouds Wilderness, ID by Nick Lake / Tandemstock.com Beta: page 120

It takes
5 WEEKS
to brew your perfect
ZERO DAY.



SLOW *by* **NATURE**

Enjoy Responsibly. ©2019 Devils Backbone Brewing Company, Vienna Lager. Lexington, VA



Starting at just \$6,000,
it's easy to find your AWAY.
When you go RVing, AWAY is closer and
more affordable than you might think.



FOLDING CAMPING TRAILER



TRUCK CAMPER



TRAVEL TRAILER



"EXPANDABLE" TRAVEL TRAILER



SPORT UTILITY RV



FIFTH-WHEEL TRAVEL TRAILER



TYPE B MOTORHOME



TYPE C MOTORHOME



TYPE A MOTORHOME



PARK MODEL RV

BACKPACKER

GET OUT MORE

gps enabled™

STAFF PICKS

What's your secret to summer fun? (See page 65 for more.)

EDITORIAL

Meadow Frisbee → **Editor-in-chief**
Dennis Lewon
Deputy Editor
Casey Lyons
Senior Editor
Maren Horjus
Senior Digital Editor
Adam Roy
Gear Editor
Eli Bernstein
Assistant Skills Editor
Zoe Gates

Group permits →

There's always room for a hammock. →

Shady campsites →

Every hike ends with ice cream. →

If you encounter water—no matter how cold or shallow—get in. →

A pint of gelato insulated in a sleeping bag →

Northwest Field Editor
Ted Alvarez
Rocky Mountain Field Editor
Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan
Southwest Field Editor
Annette McGivney
Contributing Editors
Kelly Bastone,
William M. Rochfort, Jr.
Editorial Interns
David Gleisner, Rebecca Rubnitz

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Art Director
Mike Leister
Senior Photo Editor + Staff Photographer
Louisa Albanese
Associate Art Director
Kenneth Doory
Photography Intern
Trang Le

Picking trails with pubs nearby →

FIELD SCOUTS

Anastasia Allison, Justin Bailey, Paul Chisholm, Laura Lancaster, Korey Peterson, Stasia Stockwell, Ryan Wichelns, Erica Zazo

ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA OUTDOOR GROUP

General Manager
Sharon Houghton
Building Manager
Tony Wilhelms
I.T. Specialist
Tony Pene

Exploring new trails →

SALES

Publisher
Sharon Houghton
303.253.6412
shoughton@aimmedia.com

Sales Director
Rob Hudson
303.253.6324
rhudson@aimmedia.com

Midwest Account Director
Brian Brigman
773.329.3957
bbrigman@aimmedia.com

West Coast + Colorado Account Director
Lesli Krishnaiah
303.253.6353
lkrishnaiah@aimmedia.com

Utah Account Director
Ginna Larson
303.859.7276
glarson@aimmedia.com

Corporate Sales
JoAnn Martin
joannmartin@aimmedia.com

Sales Assistant
Beth Prehn

Early-morning trail runs →

Paddling trips →

MARKETING

Marketing and Business Development Director
Courtney Matthews
Business Development + Event Director
Rebecca Hayden Louzan
781.635.6719
rhaydenlouzan@aimmedia.com

Marketing Manager
Tina Rolf
Strategic Campaign Manager
Leslie Barrett
Marketing Coordinator
Peter Heffelfinger
Events Ambassador
Randy Propster

Finding undiscovered side canyons with our packrafts →

Going barefoot as much as possible →

Simple: road trip! →

PRODUCTION

Prepress Manager
Joy Kelley
Prepress Specialists
Idania Mentana
Circulation Director
Jenny Desjean
Single Copy Sales Manager
NPS



ACTIVE INTEREST MEDIA
Copyright 2019 © Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc.

President & CEO
Andrew W. Clurman
Senior Vice President,
CFO, COO & Treasurer
Michael Henry
Chief Innovation Officer
Jonathan Dorn

Vice President,
Digital products
Katie Herrell
Vice President,
Audience Development
Tom Masterson
Vice President, Production
and Manufacturing
Barb Van Sickle

Vice President,
People and Places
JoAnn Thomas
Controller
Devon Hopkins
AIM Board Chair
Efrem Zimbalist III

Bushwhacking to hidden swimming holes



FREELANCE SUBMISSIONS
backpacker.com/guidelines

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
letters@backpacker.com

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES
5720 Flatiron Parkway, Boulder, CO 80301

SELLING BACKPACKER
To sell Backpacker in your retail store, call MagDogs at (800) 365-5548.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & READER PREFERENCES
Backpacker Subscription Department
PO Box 37274, Boone, IA 50037-0274
backpacker.com/subservice
BKPcustserv@cdsfulfillment.com
(800) 666-3434 (515-237-3669 outside the U.S. and Canada)



GoRVing.com



Away

*is a place where
you can connect
with nature
and each other.*



Every mile on the road brings you closer to the ones you love.

Find your Away
Go RVing

Alone or together,
all hikers share
a common bond.



CELEBRATE NATIONAL SUMMIT DAY ON AUGUST 3

We're mobilizing a nation of hikers. Join us by climbing a peak—anywhere, big or small—and be part of summer's best celebration. Need another reason? Here are the top five.

1. THE VIEW

OK, you don't need us to tell you a good view is worth the effort. But climbing to a summit is about more than the scenery—it can give you a new perspective on life. Just ask Rick Sanger, a former backcountry ranger who climbed a mountain at just the right time in his own life (page 81).

2. THE COMMUNITY

Looking for the ultimate bonding experience? Do something you love with others who share the passion. Hiking clubs all over the country are leading group hikes; find one to join at the website below.

3. THE CHARITY

National Summit Day supports Big City Mountaineers, a nonprofit organization that mentors under-resourced youth on wilderness trips.

4. THE PRIZES

Share photos and stories from your National Summit Day climb using the hashtag #nationalsummitday and you'll have a chance to win swag from the BACKPACKER gear closet.

5. THE HERO SHOT

Tag your summit pic and we'll publish the best ones. And remember, when you climb for a cause, you really are a hero (see #3).

Find a peak or group hike near you:
backpacker.com/nationalsummitday.

Join the Club

Become a member of BACKPACKER Basecamp, and you're sure to get out more.

THOUGH MOST OF US find it hard to believe, not everyone loves backpacking. In fact, the vast majority of people in the United States don't plan vacations with the goal of carrying a heavy pack all day, fending off bugs and bad weather, pooping in a cathole, and sleeping on the ground.

That's because it takes a certain type of person to reject a fridge full of food and the luxury of modern plumbing, if only for a weekend. I take pride in being part of this club and I'm sure you do too, because we know something the majority of people don't: Backpacking is good for body and soul. We know that the time we spend outdoors—getting dirty, sweaty, hot, cold—makes us healthier and happier. The only thing backpackers routinely complain about? Not spending *enough* time outside.

We're fixing that with our new membership program, BACKPACKER Basecamp, designed to help you do more of what you love. We started by surveying more than a thousand readers to learn what you want



most. Based on the feedback, we put together a program that connects you with the tools you need to get out more often, with more safety and confidence. I'm also excited about the community we're building—it's a

place where you can join others who share your passion for the outdoors, including the BACKPACKER staff.

How's it work? You sign up for the club, and immediately gain access to special gear discounts, skills videos, trip advice, and more. The benefits include:

- » Discounts on new gear from top brands
- » On-demand video tutorials on subjects like navigation, survival, first aid, cooking, and more
- » Monthly newsletter with exclusive content and contests
- » Editors' personal trail and gear advice
- » A private Facebook group for community members
- » VIP perks at BACKPACKER events
- » An annual subscription to the magazine

Ready to start getting out more? Find details at backpacker.com/basecamp.

FELL FROM HEAVEN

© 2019 Fiji Water Company LLC. All Rights Reserved. FIJI, EARTH'S FINEST, EARTH'S FINEST FOR FITNESS, the Trade Dress and accompanying logos are trademarks of FIJI Water Company LLC or its affiliates. FW190322-04

TO GET YOU THROUGH HELL

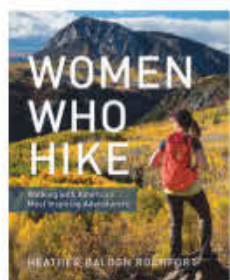
EARTH'S FINEST FOR FITNESS™ THE FIJI WATER SPORTS CAP



Sam Kim hikes with his wife, Sunny.

High Regard

After we published Will Cockrell's story about Sam Kim, the hiker who set out to climb Southern California's Mt. Baldy 1,000 times ("A Man and His Mountain," May/June 2019), our Facebook followers chimed in with their own memories of the local trail legend. "Sam was my neighbor," wrote [Mark Galanty](#). "No one loved trails and the thrill of bottom-to-top-back-to-the-bottom days as much as Sam." [Tim Sandoval](#) remembered Sam's unique trail habits. "He loved his pictures. And his hard-boiled eggs and avocados," he wrote. [Sean Jagow](#) recalled an encounter on Baldy: "I met him on a rainy day while descending from the summit. He was coming up the mountain and had his big poncho on, and he stopped to talk with us," Jagow wrote. "He was a genuine man and I was glad to have shared a moment with him on the mountain he loved."



INSPIRATION ALERT

Need a role model? In her new book *Women Who Hike* (\$25; [falcon.com](#)), BACKPACKER contributor [Heather Balogh Rochfort](#) profiles 20 of the outdoors' most accomplished

female adventurers, athletes, and business executives, while providing trail beta for their favorite hikes.

SAY "I DO" TO HIKING

When we featured Texas's Enchanted Rock as our Hike of the Week, it stirred up memories of a special day for [Bryon Emelander](#). "I got married there on May 1, 1975, before it was a state park, right on top," he wrote. "Had a reception down at the campground. We had a pig roast with all the sides, and the Pearl beer was flowing like a river."

Our next Hike of the Week could be your next favorite memory. Get the latest by following the hashtag #HikeOfTheWeek on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.



BYE BYE BABY?

In "Backpack With a Baby" (page 44, May/June 2019), Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan confessed her fear of her adventurous toddler escaping the tent at night. A few parents wrote in with their own tried-and-true suggestions for keeping Baby in bed. "I always used a quilting safety pin to keep the tent zips together," wrote [Cookie Stevens](#). "Maybe our tent is taller, but when we zip it up, we make sure the zippers are at the top—out of young children's reach," said [Adael Sumner](#). [Jeff Latka](#), on the other hand, thought the problem would solve itself: Just wait "until they get a blast of that chilly mountain air," he wrote. "They'll turn right around."



TAKE A ROOKIE

Our newest hero: Eva Luna Harper-Zahn, who summited Mt. Whitney with her father and brother at just 6 years old. (Read her story at [backpacker.com/evaluna](#).) Unfortunately, not everyone gets a chance to start tearing up the trails at such a young age. Backpacking should

be for everyone, and this month, we're celebrating by sharing our love of the trail with new hikers. Want to join in? Take a newbie with you and post about it with the hashtag #TakeARookieHiking, and you could appear in an upcoming issue of BACKPACKER.



ENJOY OUTDOORS™



Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Chico, CA & Mills River, NC • SierraNevada.com
©Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Please Drink Responsibly



Charge ahead on life's great adventures with the comfort, fit and support of the versatile New Sawtooth II Collection.



TRAILCHAT

Your opinions, photos, and feats

STARRY SKIES



@backpackermag

Tag your 'grams #trailchat for a chance to be featured here and on our Instagram feed.



@zionadventurephotog

Rancho Feliz, Cannonville, Utah

Utah's vast deserts and dark skies make for gorgeous stargazing, and adventure photographer Arika Bauer captured the heavens at their best at Ranchito Feliz, a private campground tucked into the middle of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Reserve the site for yourself at bit.do/ranchitofeliz, or see our other suggestions for amateur astronomers starting on page 94.

YOU DID IT WRONG

In this issue's skills feature ("You're Doing it Wrong," page 103), we set out to correct 100 of the most common mistakes hikers make. We asked our Twitter followers: *What's the most memorable blunder you've ever made on the trail?*

"Forgetting the tent was one thing. But feeling super cocky about how strong I was because my pack felt so light was the real salt in the wound." -@tjsez

Packed poorly
38%

Ignored an illness
31%

Got too ambitious
31%

BACKTRACKING

In our May/June article on fly fishing (page 41), a fly that we identified as an Adams was actually a Parachute Adams.

In "10 Rules of Solitude" (page 66, May/June), we ran a photo of a hiker on the Chimney Tops in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Though the trail has reopened after fire damage, the outcroppings on the summit are closed indefinitely.

Who created the first remote-burner camp stove?

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ADVENTURE (OR MISADVENTURE)?

Which stove helped save the California Condor from extinction?

Who made the very first cycling helmet?

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT BIG OUTDOOR GOAL?

Who introduced plastic-deck snowshoes?

Who invented pit zips on outerwear?

WHAT'S YOUR MOST LOVED PIECE OF GEAR?

Which stove forever changed how mountaineers hydrate?

Who fought against gear that was overrated and under-tested?

WHY ARE YOU AN UNRULY DREAMER?

50 | FIFTY YEARS OF
UNRULY DREAMERS

SHARE YOUR STORY

msrgear.com/50th-anniversary



Play List

THIS SEASON'S TOP TRIPS & PICKS

1 WALK THROUGH TIME. YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CA

This isn't the Yosemite meadow you've heard about. It's better. Unlike Tuolumne and the park's other famous greens, Dana Meadows remains virtually empty even in summer. The reason? It's tucked away near the park's east entrance, far from the busy zones. Go at daybreak like photographer Robb Hirsch did for ultimate solitude: Hop on the Mono Pass Trail and hike east through Dana Meadows, where kettles formed from the last of the Tuolumne glaciers 10,000 years ago fill with today's runoff. Keep going 4 miles up 10,600-foot Mono Pass, where views stretch to rust-colored Bloody Canyon and the otherworldly spires that protrude from Mono Lake. Turn around at infinity pool-like Upper Sardine Lake for a 9-mile out-and-back dayhike. **PERMIT** None **CONTACT** nps.gov/yose



2

'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN

After a decade of detours, the loop around Mt. Hood is complete and better than ever. *By Benjamin Tepler*

→ **THE SUNLIGHT REFLECTING** off the White River is so bright I can barely see the rapids that are thundering in my ears. This is the most difficult ford on the 40-mile Timberline Trail. I squint across the swath of glacial whitewater and see no sign of the trail on the other side. *It's camouflaged by the beige cliff rising out of the river valley*, I assure myself. A mere 2 miles from closing the famed circuit, I'm completely stuck.

The Timberline Trail is the most storied multiday backpacking trip in Oregon. It circles the 11,000-foot cone of Mt. Hood, dipping between alpine meadows, moss-shrouded waterfalls, and steep, rocky outcrops with panoramic views across the state and into Washington. In 1885, trail pioneers sketched out the first few segments, but it wasn't until the 1930s, when Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps, that the route became a ring. But due to the hairy river crossings, few people have thru-hiked it. I myself have ticked off its best in bits and pieces, but was turned around on my last thru-hike attempt when the Eliot Branch, one of the trail's five critical crossings, was impassable.

While the majority of the trail is well-signed, the safest fords drift year to year as glacial melt rearranges the shoreline. That means no GPS tracks or cairns point to safe passage. Moreover, the current often crests on summer afternoons. In 2006, a particularly powerful flood pulverized the bridge across the Eliot Branch, on the northeast side of the mountain, making circumnavigation impossible. At the end of 2016, the Forest Service rerouted the trail to a wider section of the Eliot Branch, shallow enough to boulder-hop in low water. That's what gave me the confidence to try for the four-day, full circuit once again.

The Timberline Trail is a Cascadian roller coaster, with bountiful water sources and well-established campsites the whole way. Moving clockwise from the path's de-facto starting point at the luxe Timberline Lodge, I started my route up the west side. I crossed Paradise Park's display of fuchsia Indian paintbrushes and violet lupines and the silky veil of 120-foot Ramona Falls. Farther along, I reached McNeil Point's historic, glacier lily-shrouded stone shelter at 5,900 feet, below Hood's craggy western face. Around the east side, I climbed above 7,000 feet on Gnarl Ridge, the trail's gusty high point, and strolled through *Sound of Music* wildflowers at Elk Meadows and ski resorts silenced by summer.

Nearly two-thirds of the way into the hike, I reached the Eliot Branch's new crossing. It was no longer the heart-pounding gamble I remembered from failed earlier attempts. The freshly blazed trail led me to a relatively tame passage (in the morning, at least), and I grinned smugly at succeeding where I and so many other hikers had failed in years past.

When I hit the White River and its crescendo of crashing rapids, 10 miles and several crossings later, I can nearly taste the lodge's Ice Axe IPA. I pace the banks, scanning across to the tan cliffs, then, finally: *the dusty outline of a trail!* I shuffle, thigh-deep, facing the icy current. Soon the lodge's iconic snow goose weather vane pops into view over the ridge. I breathe. I laugh. I'm giddy. It took a decade, but I've finally closed the loop. 🌲

DO IT There plenty of access points, but most hikers start at Timberline Lodge and go clockwise. From Portland: Drive east on US 26 to Timberline Hwy. **SEASON** Mid-July to September (expect snowfields year-round) **PERMIT** Required (free); self-issue at the trailhead. **CONTACT** www.fs.usda.gov/mthood





TEXT BY MORGAN MCFALL-JOHNSON (FIRST TRACKS)

Wildflowers bloom trailside in July and August.

FIRST TRACKS

3

LITTLE JERUSALEM BADLANDS STATE PARK, KS



When pioneers passed through a 200-acre plot of chalk formations in the western Kansas prairie, they dubbed it “Little Jerusalem” for the holy land they imagined it resembled. State officials, who recently partnered with The Nature Conservancy to protect the area and its 85-million-year-old canyons and 100-foot rock towers, say it’s more like the Badlands. You can see what you think this summer: After years with no public access, Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park (namers tried to please everyone) opens this summer (no date has been set). Hike there to see ferruginous hawks, cliff swallows, and pronghorns, as well as the largest acreage of Great Plains wild buckwheat, endemic to western Kansas. For a sampler, try the 1.2-mile Rim Trail, which traces a ridge overlooking the bluffs. **Contact** bit.do/little-jerusalem-badlands-sp

4 CROWN OF THE CONTINENT GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA

You don't need us to sell you on this park's glacier-gouged peaks, kaleidoscopic wildflower displays, and A-list megafauna. But secret trails and tips? We got those. *By Morgan McFall-Johnsen*

THE INSIDER

When **Jake Bramante** decided his life needed a reboot in 2009, he quit his job, sold his house, and headed for Glacier National Park. He became the first person to hike all 734 miles of Glacier's trails in one year, then compiled his stories, videos, and maps on a website—hike734.com—to help you, should you want to live the dream, too.

THE WILDEST WILDS

The 6-mile out-and-back to Preston Park has it all—including an option to extend. From the Siyeh Bend trailhead, climb through a fir forest to the alpine meadow, Bramante's favorite nap locale. Make plenty of noise as you approach this grizzly hangout (rent bear spray at Glacier Outfitters in Apgar). You may spy the bears hunting moths and marmots on the surrounding slopes. Settle in for lunch among the lavender showy fleabanes, purple gentians, yellow twin arnicas, and white dryas (peak bloom at the end of July). At 10,014 feet, Mt. Siyeh's sheer face of striated limestone lords to the north, while Piegan Glacier, one of the park's 26 remaining glaciers, nestles in a cirque at the end of the valley. Turn around for easy logistics, or continue over Siyeh Pass and beneath the enormous Sexton Glacier to close a 10-mile point-to-point at the Sunrift Gorge trailhead (grab a free shuttle back to your car before the last ride at 4:43 p.m.).

BERRY SOLITARY

Stray far from the beaten path when you head to the Two Medicine area in Glacier's southeast corner. There, soak in the alpine solitude on a quiet, 10.2-mile out-and-back to Firebrand Pass, where berries burst from the underbrush in August. Find the trailhead on US 2 near mile marker 203,

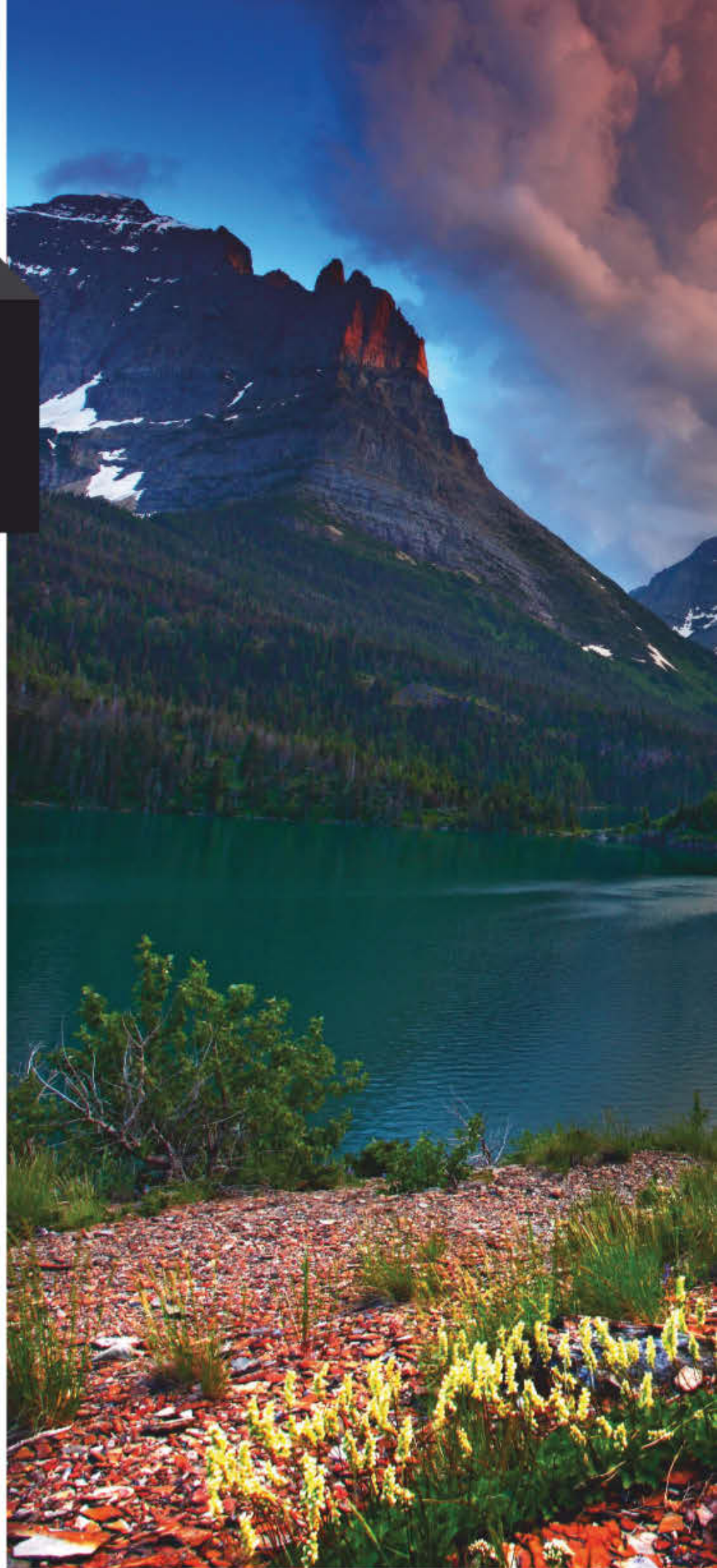
then meander through mountain meadows and aspen stands en route to a high basin at mile 4.5. Along the way, huckleberries are ripe for picking (park rules allow you to collect up to a quart).

FULL CIRCLE

Bramante swears by the 17.9-mile Pitamakan-Dawson Loop—a much quieter alternative to the popular Highline Trail. “It's the closest thing to peakbagging that you can have on-trail in Glacier,” he says. “You get epic views the whole hike.” Bramante prefers to do it counterclockwise to enjoy the 2-mile boat ride across Two Medicine Lake at the back end of the trip (or skip the tour boat altogether by hiking 3.1 miles along the shore). From the Two Medicine Campground, take the Oldman Lake Trail through the pines, then climb to the scree-filled saddle below 8,781-foot Mt. Morgan at mile 7.6. Follow the shale 3.2 miles along the ridgeline high above gray peaks, green drainages, and blue alpine lakes. Tackle a steep descent into Bighorn Basin, where the area's namesake sheep loiter with their lambs (peak cuteness in late July). Camp at a mountain goat favorite, No Name Lake, in the shadow of Pumpelly Pillar's twisted mudstone column. Close the loop by skirting meadows of purple harebell, blue gentian, and white mountain deathcamas. (Take the .9-mile spur to the boat docks; buy a \$14 ticket on-board or at glacierparkboats.com.)

RESERVOIR ROUNDABOUT

To sample the best of the Many Glacier area without the crowds, stop just before you reach its heart. On Many Glacier Road, pull over 1.5 miles short of the ranger station at the Apikuni Falls trailhead to tick off a 27-mile, three-day loop. Pick



Clockwise from above: The Sun Point Nature Trail is a looker; SUP below the Upper Grinnell Glacier (rent a board at Glacier Outfitters in Apgar); and mind the gap by Avalanche Creek in West Glacier.

up the trail to Poia Lake and trek 6.5 miles through aspens, keeping an eye out for elk as you follow a 5,600-foot ridge. Take a dip in Poia's clear water (Bramante says it's one of Glacier's “warmest” lakes), lounge on the pebble beach, and set up camp for a night beneath bare limestone. On day two, log a 10-mile push by climbing to Redgap Pass, which overlooks two river drainages and the teardrop of Kennedy Lake. Drop down the scree



PHOTOS BY (TOP RIGHT) BEN HERNDON /
TANDEMSTOCK.COM; IAN SHIVE / TANDEMSTOCK.COM
TEXT BY MORGAN MCFALL-JOHNSON (IN THE CLUB)

slope and continue to Elizabeth Lake at mile 17, where Bramante, a self-described “bird nerd,” once did a loon survey. He recommends overnigh-
ing at the lake’s outlet to catch the loons’ eerie calls and morning reflec-
tions of the surrounding 9,000-foot peaks. Next day, backtrack to the
junction below Redgap Pass and bear south to walk through the 250-foot
Ptarmigan Tunnel, carved into pink rock. Now in the main Many Glacier

area, you may encounter some hikers, but the historic tunnel is worth the company. At the road, walk 1.5 miles east to your car.

POSTCARD VIEW

For the best sweat-to-scenery ratio in the park, tackle the 12.5-mile out-and-back to Cracker Lake. From the historic Many Glacier Hotel, follow a creek all the way to the gla-
cial cirque (just 1,500 feet of gain),



passing summer flora like purple sky pilots, white dryas, pink wild roses, and red-spotted saxifrages. If high wind doesn’t turn you around, camp beneath the 3,000-foot cliffs that tower over the half-mile-wide tarn.

TRIP PLANNER

SEASON Mid-July to late September, though high passes may not open until mid-August depending on snowpack.

PERMIT Required for overnights (\$40 application fee + \$7/night per person); reserve online. Walk-in permits avail-
able day of. **CONTACT** nps.gov/glac

5

IN THE CLUB

...IN WHICH WE HONOR THE BEST HIKING CLUBS IN THE COUNTRY.

Whether training to climb the Adirondacks’ 46 High Peaks or just looking to get out more, any upstate New Yorker can find his or her place in the **Triple Cities Hiking Club**. The Binghamton-area group has been around since the 1940s, so its 300 members know a thing or two about what makes a good club. First, they have an elected board and assigned trip leaders to keep things organized. Second, they always offer at least three hikes of varying difficulty and length every weekend. Third, they give back by maintaining 32 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail. And fourth, they offer biannual dinner meetings for the curious. If that’s you, visit triplecitieshikingclub.org to learn more.

Think your club deserves a shout out? Tell us why at intheclub@backpacker.com.





6

TRIPLE YOUR FUN. BLACKWATER FALLS STATE PARK, WV

This park's namesake cascade is reason enough to visit, but after checking out the 57-foot plume on a quick, .4-mile out-and-back, go high. Take the Dobbin House and Pase Point Trails roughly 1.5 miles west through dense hardwood forest on the north edge of Blackwater Canyon to the Pase Point Overlook, an outcropping that juts above the canopy and over the gorge. There, stand high above the North Fork confluence with a view that stretches down the canyon like a gunsight. Like what you see? On your drive out, peel off at Lindy Point for a .8-mile out-and-back to this view, where photographer Martin Radigan lucked into low-hanging fog (best chances in morning). There's no wrong way to do Blackwater Canyon, but seeing it three ways seems the most right. **PERMIT** None **CONTACT** bit.do/blackwater-falls-sp

7 TOWERS OF POWER

Score bird's-eye views over valleys and mountains on these four treks to summit lookouts.
By Mark Wetherington

McCart LOOKOUT BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST, MT

Be grateful for this hike's short approach—it just means more time to savor the view from the restored fire lookout's catwalk, where you can spy three different ranges. Hop on the gentle McCart-Johnson Peak Trail, climbing just 500 feet in 1.5 miles through lodgepole pines to an obvious junction. There, turn north and follow a short path—lined with Indian paintbrush—to the wooden tower. Upon arrival, climb on up and see the serrated spine of the Bitterroot Mountains to the west, the peaks and ridges of the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness on the horizon to the south and east, and the rolling Sapphire Mountains to the north. Can't tear yourself away from the view? Reserve McCart for the night (up to six months in advance; \$30; recreation.gov), then spend the next day exploring the Continental Divide. **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot

HISTORIC HARNEY LOOKOUT TOWER BLACK ELK WILDERNESS, SD

Hikers who stand on the summit of Black Elk Peak enjoy a double dose of accomplishment—this 7,242-foot mountain is South Dakota's high-point and the tallest mountain east of the Rockies. And that doesn't even include the 20-foot boost you'll score from the stone tower at the top. Get there on a 7-mile loop from Sylvan Lake in Custer State Park: Take the Sylvan Lake Shore Trail across a creek and veer north onto the Black Elk Peak Trail. Ascend to a saddle overlooking the sprawling Black Hills (green in real life), then summit near mile 3.5 and savor the view: On clear days, you can see 90 miles northwest into Montana and 60 miles south into Nebraska. Close the loop on the Norbeck Trail and Trail #4, which passes the granite hulk of Little Devils Tower and the needle-like Cathedral Spires. **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills

Get an eyeful from the McCart Lookout.

MT. CAMMERER LOOKOUT GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, TN/NC

Break out of the Appalachian Trail's green tunnel for a view-packed ridgewalk to this lookout, perched on an outcrop at 4,928 feet. The stone-and-timber tower—with its wrap-around porch—was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s for spotting fires in the newly established national park. Like a crow's nest, it looms above the blue-hued peaks, offering a vantage across the Smokies all the way to the edge of the Pigeon River Gorge. From Cosby Campground, link the Low Gap, Appalachian, and Mt. Cammerer Trails on an 11.2-mile out-and-back to get there. Near mile 5, weave past rhododendron and mountain laurel (peak bloom in June) to the 10-foot-tall lookout, which rises from the bedrock. (This is a popular spot: Go midweek for solitude.) **Contact** nps.gov/grsm

8 SWEAT EQUITY MAINTAINING TRAILS

Use some elbow grease to give back to the land you love. *By Claire Thompson*

→ **LIKE A LOT OF HIKERS**, I took trails for granted for far too long. But that changed six years ago in the North Cascades, when the path I was following disappeared into a brush tunnel of alder and willow so high and thick, I immediately regretted wearing shorts. While my hiking partner and I paused to debate the pros and cons of continuing, a woman and her two kids burst through the wall of branches. The look on her face clearly indicated that the cons had won out. “I’m kind of mad at the Forest Service right now,” she half-joked as the trio squeezed past.

Now, I recall this woman’s words while on a trip with my Forest Service trail crew. We’re 5 miles deep in Washington’s Glacier Peak Wilderness, a district that has a checklist of brush tunnels and downed trees to contend with every year. Loppers and folding saw in hand, I give the foliage a drive-by trim as I descend into a forested drainage where downfall dominates.

Mad at the Forest Service? I understand the frustration, but my six-person crew has more than 700 miles of trail to maintain. We have no money for overtime, and—with fire suppression eating up more of the budget every year—we rely on volunteers. Any hiker dismayed by the sorry state of a neglected trail should pitch in. Channel your frustration by swinging a tool. It might change the way you look at trails forever.

It did for me. It’s mid-morning, 7 miles along the Buck Creek Trail, a path that burned last year, and we’re here to clean up the mess. First: a 50-yard stretch of dead-fall piled like pick-up sticks. By now, my partner and I know the routine and drop

our packs. We prep each log by whacking off its limbs, making our cuts, and heaving the pieces off the trail. Settling into the rhythmic pull of a two-person crosscut saw is simultaneously soothing and trying—we move through wood with a back-and-forth stroke that feels like relief, even as my back and arms and legs ache.

These days, when I’m off the job and I hike through a corridor of cut logs—maybe cleared so long ago they’ve started to decompose into the dirt or sprout shelves of fungi—I imagine what the pileup looked like before a trail crew came upon it. Once, in Canyonlands National Park, I paused to marvel at a 20-step rock staircase, remembering days I spent on Colorado trails, heaving boulders into hand-dug pockets and crossing my fingers each one fit so I wouldn’t have to haul it back out.

As we descend—now on the Boulder Pass Trail—we stop once more. I force my way into the tangles of a vine maple to reach the base of a long limb with my hand saw. I haven’t returned to the North Cascades trail where I once encountered the mom and her two kids in years, but I find myself wondering if the brush has been cut back. Maybe it was trimmed by a trail crew like mine, or maybe by volunteers. I hope she was one of them. 🌲

HELP OUT Want to work on a trail? Inquire with your local hiking club or look into the American Hiking Society’s volunteer vacations. Day trips often involve cutting brush, while longer ones give you chances to tackle big projects like constructing bridges or walls or even building new trails.

OREGON BUTTE LOOKOUT WENAH-TUCANNON WILDERNESS, WA

The journey is just as good as the destination on the 6-mile out-and-back to the Oregon Butte Lookout (actually in Washington). The approach packs in forested canyons, empty ridges, and an array of midsummer blooms. And then, of course, it deposits you at an aerie on 6,387-foot Oregon Butte, the highpoint of Washington’s Blue Mountains. Venture out from the Teepee trailhead, following the Oregon Butte Trail through a forest studded with flowers like purple lupine and yellow aster. Break above the trees near mile 2.5, then continue a half-mile to the lookout. In summer, it’s staffed by folks who scan for wildfire smoke, but they don’t mind sharing the view—a 360-degree stunner that stretches 75 miles south to Oregon’s Wallowa Mountains. **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla

PHOTO BY ADAM MOWERY / TANDEMSTOCK.COM



9 Party on a peak.

Join BACKPACKER and Big City Mountaineers for a continent-spanning National Summit Day celebration on August 3. Learn more at backpacker.com/nationalsummitday.

10

GO ON AN EPIC. PASAYTEN WILDERNESS, WA

Make at least one trip this summer a hike that you—and your quads—will remember. Go deep, deep, *deep* into the backcountry on the 43-mile Devils Dome Loop in the North Cascades. Done in four or five days, it racks up more than 10,000 feet of elevation gain as it bores through the high

country on the Washington-Canada border. This view is near the halfway point (if you start at Canyon Creek), looking south toward the glacier-mantled Jack Mountain massif. Plenty of eye candy makes the miles fly by. **PERMIT** Required (free) for overnighting at Ross Lake in North Cascades National Park on the final night; obtain from the Marblemount Ranger Station. **CONTACTS** www.fs.usda.gov/okawen; nps.gov/noca



SO TASTY EVERYONE WILL WANT A BITE.

©2019 Preferred Brands International. All rights reserved.



Made with all-natural ingredients, TASTY BITE® is perfect for you and any unexpected visitors on the trail. Just look for the yellow pouch in the international food aisle and toss some in your pack.*

tastybite.com

*Keep wildlife wild; Don't feed the animals.

11

A CAMP FOR KINGS

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA

THE HIKE IN was great—like, massive-gorges, snowcapped-peaks, knock-your-socks-off great. But it's nothing—*nothing*—compared to the Hamilton Lakes basin. We crest the final set of switchbacks, and suddenly we stand before a blue jewel of a lake surrounded by thousand-foot-tall granite walls. This is Yosemite on steroids, a glacial cirque cut deep in the Great Western Divide. Each tick of the clock improves our already-awesome situation, as sunset turns the rock coral, then starlight begins to fleck the sky and, before I know it, I've got a front-row seat to the best dinner show in the Sierra. I don't know how tomorrow could possibly be better, but I suspect it might be. *By Emily Pennington*



TURN-BY-TURN FROM THE CRESCENT MEADOW TRAILHEAD

- 1) Take the **High Sierra Trail** 10.6 miles east, threading together lodgepole pine forest, alpine meadows, and big views of the Great Western Divide high above the Middle Fork Kaweah River gorge, to **Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra Camp**.
- 2) Next day, stay on the trail 1.6 miles.
- 3) Cross the wooden bridge over Lone Pine Creek and veer east to stay on the **High Sierra Trail**, which steadily climbs 900 feet in 1.9 miles to the **Hamilton Lakes** basin.
- 4) Retrace your steps 14.3 miles to the trailhead.

CAMPSITE 1 BEARPAW MEADOW (MILE 10.6)

Pass the Bearpaw Meadow High Sierra Camp, a summer-staffed, rustic backcountry lodge, and descend .1 mile to the first-come, first-serve backpacking camp, tucked in a grove of red firs and lodgepole pines. It lacks the views of the tent cabins next door, but it's a lot cheaper. Good plan: Buy a sunset beer at the adjacent High Sierra Camp and toast all that money you saved.

CAMPSITE 2 HAMILTON LAKES (MILE 14.3)

This hike's pièce de résistance, the Hamilton Lakes basin is truly a can't-go-wrong sort of heaven. Pick a



Cowboy camping
beside Hamilton Lake

THE GOOD FIGHT

12

SAVE THE EAST VERDE RIVER, ARIZONA.

Nearly 3 million acres of cactus-filled desert, wooded mountains, and braided waterways make the Tonto National Forest in central Arizona a life-list destination for hikers across the country. But the Tonto, located just northeast of Phoenix, is vulnerable to development on inholdings, which threatens habitat for the area's 21 endangered and sensitive species. In 2017, the Western Rivers Conservancy bought the 149-acre Doll Baby Ranch, a crucial access point for the Arizona Trail and home to a mile-long stretch of the East Verde River, in an effort to preserve the river and the land surrounding it. This March, the group transferred the land to the Forest Service, ensuring public access to trails and providing a safe haven for native fish species like Colorado pikeminnow and razor-back sucker. But there's still more to be done. Learn about the fight at westernrivers.org.



PHOTO BY MOREY MILBRADT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO.
TEXT BY DAVID GLEISNER (THE GOOD FIGHT)

granite shelf on the northwest corner of the bigger (eastern) of the two lakes for your tent, and skip the fly on a clear night. You just might feel like you've tiptoed into the living room of the mountain gods. Nature calling? Lucky you: Perhaps the world's most scenic pit toilet is 100 yards northwest, facing 2,500-foot-tall Valhalla, an El Capitan look-alike.

FLORA

Depending on snowpack, July is typically prime time for petal peeping at this elevation. A parade of summer blooms smears the meadows along this bit of the High Sierra Trail; look for

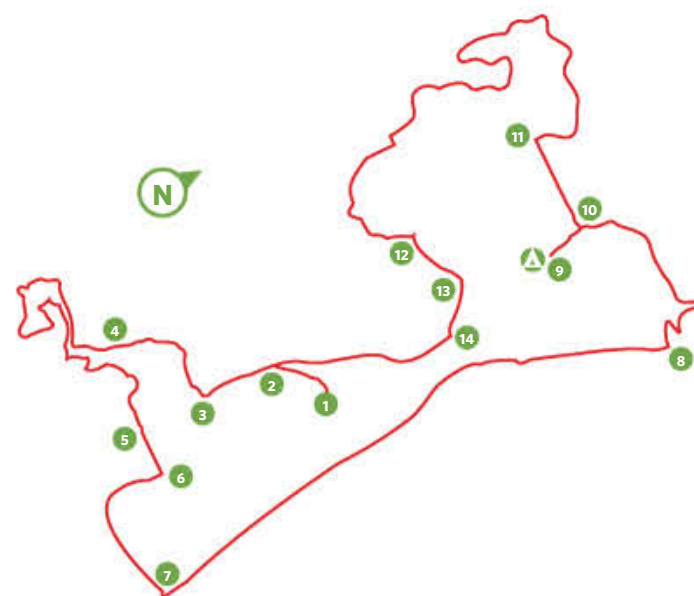
purple and blue lupines, red Applegate's paintbrushes, and unique crimson Western columbines.

DO IT TRAILHEAD 36.5547, -118.7493; 25 miles northeast of Three Rivers on Crescent Meadow Rd.
SEASON June to October **PERMIT** Required (\$10 + \$5/person); reservations recommended in high season. **CONTACT** nps.gov/seki

Distance 28.6 miles (out and back)
Time 3 days
Difficulty ● ● ● ● ●



Silver maples in the St. Croix floodplain



CAMPSITE BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITE #2 (MILE 6.7)

Find Afton's 27 backcountry sites tucked on this bluff above the St. Croix River. Each comes with one or two tent platforms, a fire ring, and a table (first-come, first-serve or reserve online). A solar-powered water pump negates the need for long hauls to the St. Croix. Arrive early to nab Campsite #2, the most secluded of the bunch.

RESTORATION PROJECT

Since Afton became a state park in 1969, an ongoing effort has been underway to restore its tallgrass prairie. You'll notice some sections still overrun by invasive cheat grass (uniform and monotone compared to the colorful native prairie), but a program of prescribed burns and native seed dispersal is steadily reclaiming the land. Look for native pasqueflowers, butterfly weeds, puccons, and blazing stars—and bluebirds and meadowlarks flitting among them.

WILDLIFE

In summer, look for painted turtles sunbathing on the banks of the slow-moving St. Croix and bald eagles soaring above. Foxes, white-tailed deer, badgers, and wild turkeys inhabit the forests and prairie here.

DO IT TRAILHEAD 44.8535, -92.7767; 22 miles southeast of St. Paul on 70th St. S/ Washington County Hwy. 20 **SEASON** Year-round; summer brings wildflowers and abundant wildlife, winter is even quieter and you get to use the ski trails and yurts. **PERMIT** Required (\$19); reserve online or obtain at the ranger station. **CONTACT** bit.do/afton-sp

Distance 11.1 miles (lollipop-loop)
Time 2 days
Difficulty ● ● ● ● ●

13 WHISPERS ON THE WIND

AFTON STATE PARK, MINNESOTA



THE WIND PLAYS Afton State Park like an instrument. The music begins at the start of this 11.1-mile loop, when the summer breeze rustles through the leaves of oak, aspen, and hickory above the trail. When I step into the prairie, the whispers follow all around me, as big bluestem and wild rye sway in the gentle breeze, and insects buzz all around. With no other hikers around, the sounds seem magnified. I can't help but wonder what secrets the trees and the grasses hold. Whatever they are, I hope they're as good as mine—that I'm only 30 minutes from the hustle of downtown St. Paul, and yet still in the untamed wilds. *By Korey Peterson*

TURN-BY-TURN FROM THE VISITOR CENTER

- 1) From the second parking lot, take the main trail .3 mile west to a T-junction.
- 2) The loop is 10.5 miles and camp is near the middle, so you can go either way; the writer went counterclockwise. To do the same, veer south and proceed .2 mile to another fork.
- 3) Turn west and follow the unnamed trail past hardwoods to the park road at mile 1.
- 4) Cross under the paved road and pick up the **Deer Valley Loop**, following it 1.8 miles through the forest to the park road again.
- 5) Take the connector trail .2 mile east.
- 6) Head south on another connector that doglegs east to the **St. Croix River** at mile 3.6.
- 7) Trek north on the **River Trail**, paralleling the water to the park boundary at mile 5.7.

- 8) Head west on-trail away from the St. Croix before cruising into the backcountry campsites at mile 6.7. (Stay straight through half a dozen trail junctions along the way.)
- 9) Next day, backtrack .2 mile north to a four-way intersection.
- 10) Turn west and hike .3 mile to another junction.
- 11) Head north on the **Prairie Loop**, which wends 2.5 miles through the grasslands.
- 12) Turn east off the **Prairie Loop**, plunging .4 mile through the forest to the final junction.
- 13) Veer south to reach the T-junction from step 1 near mile 10.8.
- 14) Turn east and retrace your steps to the **Visitor Center**, closing the circuit near mile 11.1 overall.

Take your grocery list
somewhere

SWEETER.

To a golden kiwifruit with
TROPICAL TASTE
that's a keeper.

DELICIOUSLY HEALTHY,
a whole mountain of flavor,

Zespri SunGold's
an adventure you'll
want to savor.



ZESPRIKIWI.COM/WANDER



Kiwifruit
Let Your Taste Wander.

LIFE'S A BEACH

FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, NEW YORK

he
ally
ly a

A black silhouette of the state of Alaska is shown. A small green dot is located in the southeastern corner of the state, representing the location of Kodiak Island.

- 1) Follow **Trustees Walk** .2 mile south to the ocean.
- 2) Turn northeast and follow the shoreline 1.5 miles to the **Western Zone** boundary. Camp anywhere in the subsequent 2.6-mile-long swath; the writer stopped at mile 3.4 overall.
- 3) Next day, retrace your steps to the ferry terminal.


The tent real estate in this 2.6-mile-long area is virtually endless. Camp close to the dunes to avoid high tide—currents here are strong enough to sweep you out to sea—and consider bringing an umbrella or rigging a tarp for shade. The soft sand makes for a luxurious night's sleep, but also makes setup a nightmare if you don't stake your tent properly (buy sand-specific stakes or read up on deadman anchors at backpacker.com/tent-anchors before heading out). Pack in all water; there's a spigot on Trustees Walk.

In summer, look for humpback whales and bottlenose dolphins just offshore. Harbor seals occasionally take snoozes on the beach. Red foxes like to patrol the shoreline at dusk (store your food in a hard container). Summer bumper: Bring bug spray and beware the ticks.

Nice perk: You can reach Fire Island via public transit. Take the Long Island Railroad out of NYC Penn Station to the south shore of Long Island (Patchogue). Walk 1 mile south along Cedar Avenue to the Davis Park ferry terminal.

Distance 3.4+ miles
(out and back)

Time 2 days

Difficulty 



FLASH DANCE.

If you watch fireflies in your backyard, these are probably the bugs putting on the show. They're the most common species in North America, spread all along the East Coast and Midwest—and probably what Owl City had in mind with their 2009 bop. [See it](#) East of the Rockies



18-400_{mm} Di II VC HLD

**Powerful performance that exceeds
your imagination.**

World's first 22.2x ultra-telephoto high-power
zoom lens. Capture thrilling close-up action in a snap.

18-400mm F/3.5-6.3 Di II VC HLD (Model B028)

For Canon and Nikon mounts
Di II: For APS-C format DSLR cameras

NEW



TAMRON

www.tamron-usa.com

ONLY AVAILABLE AT YOUR
AUTHORIZED TAMRON USA RETAILER



Olympic's old-growth towers over the trail.

16 RIVER RUN

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK, WASHINGTON

AT MILE 20, disorientation sets in. We're buried in a canopy of lichen-draped Douglas firs that are so dense, not even a splinter of sunlight filters through. A day after we left behind the usual crowds of Olympic National Park, we're in the company of 700-year-old giants standing sentry over the otherworldly beauty of the Elwha River—upstream minerals keep the stream bright blue even on stormy days. We laugh at the good luck of having this place to ourselves, breaking the silence. But our laughter dies in our throats at the next bend: 30 feet down the trail a black bear looks just as startled as we are. We start to backtrack, and the bear goes back to its early-season berry foraging. It would rather be alone, and how can we blame it? *By Laura Lancaster*



TURN-BY-TURN FROM THE WHISKEY BEND TRAILHEAD

- 1)** Pick up the **Elwha River Trail/Pacific Northwest Trail** and take it 16.1 miles south through a forest of Douglas firs as it dances above its aquamarine namesake the whole way to the **Hayes River Guard Station**.
- 2)** Next day, dayhike 6.5 miles south on the main trail, following the Elwha River upstream to the first crossing.
- 3)** Retrace your steps back to camp and, next day, the trailhead.

CAMPSITE HAYES RIVER (MILE 16.1)

Skip the crowds at Elkhorn and make a basecamp at this riverine, first-come, first-serve site. Hike past the ranger cabin and the bear hang to find the sites between the trees. Cross the logs running perpendicular to a marshy flat and crest a short hill to find the best (read: most private) camp on the edge of the Elwha River.

RETURN OF THE SALMON

For nearly a century, salmon from the Pacific would start the journey each fall to reach their spawning ground—before getting thwarted at the Elwha

and Glines Canyon Dams. In 2012 and 2014, respectively, each was removed, and the salmon began to make the climb again. To date, they've made it 10 miles up along the Elwha River Trail—near the Elkhorn Guard Station.

GOBLINS GATE

The dams are gone, but the nature-made Goblins Gate, one of the Elwha's biggest challenges for the salmon, remains. Here, near mile 1.2 on this hike, steep canyon walls pinch in on both sides of the river to 20 feet wide. (Early visitors thought that this section of the river resembled medieval gates.)

DO IT TRAILHEAD 47.9678, -123.5824; 17 miles south of Port Angeles on Whiskey Bend Rd. **SEASON** May to September **PERMIT** Required (\$6/person); obtain at an information center. **CONTACT** nps.gov/olym

Distance 45.2 miles (out and back)
Time 3 days
Difficulty ● ● ● ● ●

17 BONE UP FOR BUSHWHACKING.

It's high season for going off-trail. Sharpen your vocab and learn what exactly is smacking you in the face and slicing your shins. *By Ethan Shaw*

Canebrake Walls of American bamboo along many a Southeastern river bottom

Chaparral West Coast scrubland filled with tough-limbed manzanita that thwacks hikers

Dog-hair Wood A grove of skinny trunks that's so tightly packed, hikers can barely squeeze through (like Colorado lodgepoles)

Hell Appalachian rhododendron/laurel thickets—also called “slicks”—which make photogenic tunnels and flay flesh

Jackstraw Timber Mountain West forest choked with blowdown or deadfall

Shinnery Scrubby, trippable Southwestern oak brush

Tread Lighter with the Danner Trail 2650

Built to move quickly and confidently, the **Trail 2650** is a lightweight option inspired by the Pacific Crest Trail that adheres to Danner's strict durability benchmarks.

HOW IT FITS »

Inspired from trail running, it features an 8mm offset from heel to toe with slightly more width in the forefoot for stability and a good-looking, everyday-wearable aesthetic.

EXO HEEL SYSTEM »

In developing the **Trail 2650**, Danner moved the heel counter to the outside of the shoe. By using a softer material and moving it away from your foot, the EXO Heel System provides a secure fit and increased comfort.

LEATHER & TEXTILE UPPER »

A lightweight textile combined with a durable leather allows for modern performance with timeless Danner® durability. Plus, strategic perforations in the leather aid airflow when you're on the move.

MESH LINING »

Lightweight and breathable for total foot comfort. The new **Trail 2650** uses a mesh liner to keep air moving and is lightly padded for additional comfort.



EVA MIDSOLE + TRAILGUARD PLATFORM »

An ultra-lightweight EVA foam midsole is formed around a TPU shank that guards your foot in uncertain terrain and provides torsional strength for stability. This process maximizes weight savings while maintaining protection, stability and durability.

VIBRAM® 460 OUTSOLE »

Self-adapting lugs and Vibram's specially formulated Megagrip compound provide long-wearing resilience with incredible grip on both wet and dry surfaces.

*Superior traction, breathable and versatile.
Athletic performance meets more than
80 years of Danner toughness.*

Danner
- EST. 1932 -

Explore both Men's & Women's styles at **[Danner.com/trail2650](https://danner.com/trail2650)**



18

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Some hikers grouse that blazing the CDT will ruin it—but that's exactly the problem with doing nothing. *By Ryan Wichelns*

→ **IT'S A REAL** choose-your-own-adventure in this Colorado section of the Continental Divide Trail. Here, like much of the long trail, dozens of threaded footpaths snake through the tundra around 12,093-foot Independence Pass. But only one way is *the* way; the others are erosion and damage caused by generations of hikers stomping through the flora and around the rock outcroppings. So which is the right trail? I can only guess.

I'm not the only one to be confused. It only takes a few wandering hikers to create a network of paths across the fragile alpine terrain—and even if we stop using the tracks today, it will take generations before they disappear. Without clear signage or trail markers, the place looks beset with cow paths.

This kind of trails-gone-wild maze happens all too frequently on the CDT, which often lacks blazes or even cairns. That's not the case everywhere. In New York's Adirondacks, where I grew up, it's policy that a hiker must always be able to see a trail marker. As soon as he or she passes one, they must be able to spot the next.

As for the CDT, it's like trail builders *wanted* to emphasize routefinding and self-reliance. "For years, the culture of the CDT was to get lost," says Teresa Martinez, the executive director of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC). But that approach may be its own undoing. Since its inception in 1978, the CDT draws more and more thru-hikers each summer (30 to 50 percent more in each of the last three years), but the lack of signage remains unchanged. That means more braids, more offshoots, and more erosion. In short, the tactics to manage a true wilderness experience are leading to the opposite.

The CDTC has noticed. Last September, the organization finished a two-year project to improve signage in key areas. The initiative wasn't full-Adirondack, but group members did add signs and blazes to some confusing junctions and terrain. Of course, many CDT alums took offense. They think that signing the CDT goes against its spirit. I empathize, but infrequent paint splatter seems a much better solution than herd paths crisscrossing open tundra. So, sorry, purists: I say go ahead and blaze up sensitive and popular areas where hikers may wander, like I did on Independence Pass. It might be the only way to protect the places we love.

And the rest of the West should take note: As more people hit trails everywhere, more route markings should follow. Without them, our favorite public lands risk being stomped to oblivion. Difficulty of access isn't enough to protect these places anymore, and the occasional reminder that you're on the right path is a small price to pay to soften our expanding impact on wild spaces. I'd take a single cairn over doubletrack every time. Only one of those takes generations to undo. 🚰

**GO AHEAD AND
BLAZE UP SENSITIVE
AND POPULAR AREAS
WHERE HIKERS MAY
WANDER.**

19

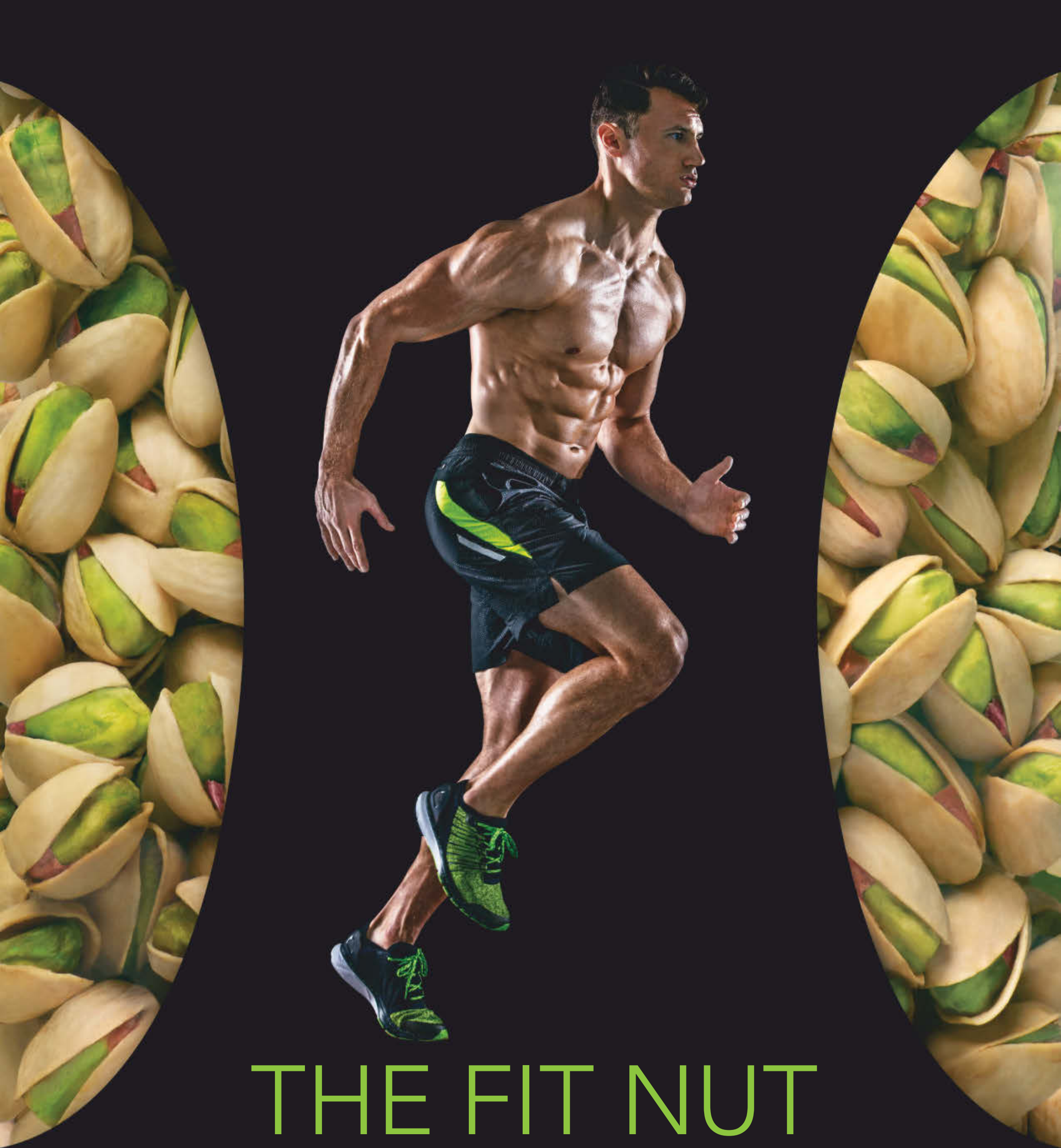
JULY 2 WORLD UFO DAY

In the summer of 1947, a rancher found a mysterious pile of debris near Roswell, New Mexico, prompting conspiracy theories of a crashed alien spacecraft and a U.S. government cover-up.

Officially, the waste was just from weather balloons, but you can't keep a good myth down. Just over half a century later, World UFO Day was born. Celebrate the holiday by making a trip

to any of the dark-sky hot spots on page 82, or head out to Cosmic Campground International Dark Sky Sanctuary in Gila National Forest, New Mexico, one of only four such sanctuaries in the country.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



THE FIT NUT

Fuel your fitness with The Wonderful Nut. Wonderful Pistachios are one of the highest-protein, highest-fiber nuts around. So push your health to new heights with this tasty little powerhouse of heart-healthy goodness.

The Skinny Nut • The Fit Nut • The Mindful Nut • The Colorful Nut • The Happy Nut

Wonderful®
PISTACHIOS

The Wonderful Nut

Scientific evidence suggests but does not prove that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as pistachios, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. See nutrition information for fat content. © 2019 Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds LLC. All Rights Reserved. WONDERFUL, THE FIT NUT, the Package Design and accompanying logos are trademarks of Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds LLC or its affiliates. WP190502-07

Drink Safely in the Backcountry

Backcountry hikers know that nothing can ruin a trip faster than drinking unclean water. And water-borne bacteria can lead to short- and long-term complications when you get back to your daily life. Good news! Carrying a proper water filter makes all the difference. Though filter technology can be overwhelming, some quick education can help make the choice easier.



Here are four key steps to guaranteeing your filter choice will deliver safe, great tasting water:

1. LOOK FOR TESTING STANDARDS.

When choosing a water filter, confirm that the technologies have been tested against and meet (or exceed) NSF International and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. This will ensure that the filter you are buying meets or exceeds the requirements of national scientific standards, and increases the likelihood that you will stay safe.

2. THE NINES MATTER.

Read up on the effectiveness of each filter you are considering. In microbiological water treatment, it's all about the number of nines after

the decimal. The NSF recommends 99.9999% bacteria removal and greater than 99.9% parasite removal. If you are considering virus removal, they recommend at least 99.99%.

3. CARRY A BACKUP!

Even if you are just going on a day hike, consider investing in a small, lightweight, backup microfilter—a LifeStraw personal weighs only 2 ounces—stick it in your backpack and forget it until you need it. Even the most experienced hikers and outdoor athletes find themselves in unexpected circumstances where drinking water is often number 1 for survival.

4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT FILTRATION TECHNOLOGY.

Consider your water sources and pack weight when selecting the ideal filtration device. Microfilters remove parasites and bacteria and are generally effective for most backcountry activities. Ultrafilters or purifiers additionally remove viruses. Ultraviolet treatment is also an effective tool though it's pricey, requires batteries, and doesn't filter dirt. Unfortunately, iodine treatment and in many cases chlorine treatment are not effective at killing *Cryptosporidium* (chlorine-dioxide takes up to 4 hours). Therefore, we don't recommend chemical treatment unless it's in combination with something else.

CHOOSING YOUR WATER FILTER






LIFESTRAW FLEX

For Versatility




The LifeStraw Flex can be used in five ways: with the squeeze bottle, as a personal filter straw, inline with a hydration pack, attached to a gravity system or screw it on to the top of a plastic water bottle.



Removes:

-  99.999999% of bacteria
-  99.999% of parasites
-  99.999% of microplastics

Reduces:

-  Lead and other heavy metals
-  Chlorine, bad odor and taste
-  Turbidity (silt, sand, and cloudiness)







LIFESTRAW MISSION

For the Whole Crew

LifeStraw Mission - This 12L gravity powered purifier with detachable bag packs down to nothing and serves up enough purified water for your whole crew.



Removes:

-  99.999% of viruses
-  99.999999% of bacteria
-  99.999% of parasites
-  99.999% of microplastics




LIFESTRAW GO

For Refills Anywhere



The LifeStraw Go reusable water filter bottle is perfect for the trail or for your travels. Refill anywhere and keep on trekking!



Removes:

-  99.999999% of bacteria
-  99.999% of parasites
-  99.999% of microplastics

Reduces:

-  Chlorine, bad odor and taste
-  Turbidity (silt, sand, and cloudiness)






LIFESTRAW

For Backup

The original award-winning LifeStraw individual straw filter weighs only 2 ounces. Throw it in your pack to make sure you're always prepared for the unexpected.

Removes:

-  99.999999% of bacteria
-  99.999% of parasites
-  99.999% of microplastics



Your purchase has impact

For every product sold, a child in need receives safe water for an entire school year.

LifeStraw® 
by VESTERGAARD

Progressive Casualty Ins. Co. & affiliates. Annual premium for a basic liability policy not available in all states. Total Loss Replacement is available for new vehicles. *Available with comprehensive and collision coverage.



IT'S WILD OUT THERE.

When it gets too wild, we have your RV covered. Basic plans start at \$125 a year with options to add total loss replacement*.

PROGRESSIVE

1.800.PROGRESSIVE | PROGRESSIVE.COM

Skill Set

HOW TO THRIVE OUTDOORS

FLOAT INTO CAMP

For better stability, pack the heaviest gear in the center of your canoe, like this loaded craft on the Whanganui River, New Zealand.

Explore wild waterways with tips on backcountry paddling. Plus: Prevent blisters, accelerate post-hike recovery, and upgrade your camp menu with three peanut butter recipes.





To put the boat down, gently toss it up so your head clears the portage yoke, and lower it to your side with control.

Your pack or PFD can provide padding where the weight rests on your shoulders.

Grasp the gunwales as shown or brace your arms out in front of you for balance. Allow the weight of the boat to drop in the back so you can see.

Portage trails link lakes and skirt obstacles like rapids or dams. They're usually marked on maps and by signs on the bank.

Canoe Camp

Grab a paddle to access quiet coves, mirror lakes, or exhilarating rapids this summer. Best part: You can pack like you're car camping when you trade boots for a boat.

By Zoe Gates

1) PLAN A REASONABLE ROUTE.

Efficient paddlers can expect to travel at least 10 miles a day on flatwater and 12 to 15 miles in a gentle downstream current. A headwind can significantly slow your pace, though, so beginners should pick routes with abundant camping options.

2) PACK FOR A CAPSIZE.

Stow your tent, sleeping bag, and clothes in watertight drybags—ones with shoulder straps and hipbelts make portaging a cinch. Leave a small air pocket in your bag before sealing to increase buoyancy. Keep small essentials like your camera and sunscreen accessible in a small drybag lashed to the canoe. Secure loose items like water bottles for rapids, and always bring an extra paddle.

3) CHECK SEASONAL CONDITIONS.

Water levels can change quickly due to snowmelt, precipitation, and dam releases. Speak with local outfitters or rangers to ensure your route is safe and passable before heading out, and always use the most current information to mark portages, rapids, and campsites on your map.

4) BALANCE YOUR BOAT.

Keep weight as even as possible (both left to right and front to back) to ensure your canoe is stable and tracks straight. Place heavy items in the center, between the yoke and thwart (the wooden brace secured between the gunwales at the canoe's middle). Maintain a low center of gravity by keeping gear tucked below the gunwales.

5) KNOW WHAT'S AHEAD.

Keep your map accessible at all times (store it in a transparent case or zip-top bag). You can sometimes scout minor rapids from the boat, but should always pull over to check out whitewater class II or higher—or any place where obstacles and currents are unknown. A loaded canoe is slow to maneuver, so react early to hazards. Or, run tricky sections with an empty boat (portage your gear) for easier steering.

6) PADDLE EFFICIENTLY.

Sit up comfortably and paddle on the opposite side of your partner. The person in the stern (back) steers, while the bow paddler acts as the motor and makes quick adjustments in fast water. Hold the paddle's T-grip so that your four fingers wrap over the top and your thumb wraps underneath. Grasp the shaft with your bottom hand as you would hold an ice cream cone. Keep the paddle nearly vertical as you hinge at the waist to draw the blade back (see right for more paddling tips).



Put Wind to Work

Paddling's fun, but covering miles while you lounge with a cold drink is hard to beat. Catch a break by taking advantage of tailwinds and setting sail on open lakes (frequent turns make sailing difficult on rivers). A 5- to 8-mph tailwind is ideal for sailing (anything faster creates chop). Look for breeze-driven ripples—not whitecaps.

In a group, join boats together. Hold onto your neighbors' gunwales or hook a leg into their boat to stay close. Tie two paddles to the corners of a tarp or rainfly (for sailing in a single canoe, a rain jacket works). Those in the bow should hold the paddles upright to hoist the sail. Stern paddlers steer.

IT HAPPENED TO ME



Berry Bliss

A day of hard paddling leads to the best backcountry surprise. *By Zoe Gates*

THERE IS SUCH A THING as a death march on the water. I learned that one summer leading a group of teenagers through a daylong headwind on Quebec's Lac Poulter. Whitecaps crested over our bows and we battled sideways rain for hours. When we finally reached land, a stony silence hung over the group. But as soon as I dragged my boat ashore, I noticed blueberry bushes dabbled across an outcrop. We'd paddled far enough that other boaters rarely came out here. The bounty was all ours.

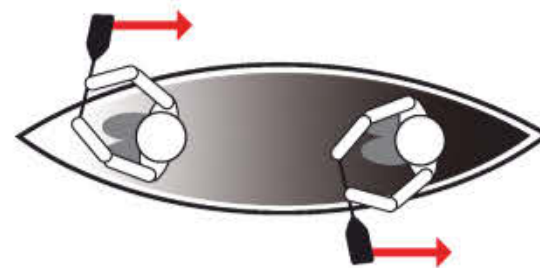
Without removing my life jacket, I began to pick. The rain had cleared, and my charges, having lived off of cold Pop-Tarts and tortillas for two weeks, were delighted. We followed blueberry bushes up a pine needle-carpeted slope where views of the lake stretched on three sides. We snacked as we went, then emptied our Nalgens to collect more. A scramble down some rocks revealed even more fruit tucked amid dense brush.

It's possible to be drunk on berries. Singing and chatting, we picked for nearly two hours and barely dented the crop. That night, we created a backcountry confection: berries cooked with lemonade mix and topped with a crumble of oatmeal and honey. Only a long paddle could deliver us to such a place—and only berries could turn a wearisome day into one we wished would never end. 🍷

CHEAT SHEET

PADDLE LIKE A PRO

Whether you want to cover long distances or navigate whitewater, master these basic strokes to get started.



Forward paddle

Both bow and stern paddlers default to this stroke. Turn your torso slightly to reach over the gunwale. Dip the entire blade in the water and pull toward the stern, generating power from your torso and back. Lift the blade out of the water at your hip. Feather the paddle to clear the water (hinge your wrist so the blade becomes parallel with the surface) while you bring it forward to the starting position. Reverse the motion (backpaddle) to go backward.



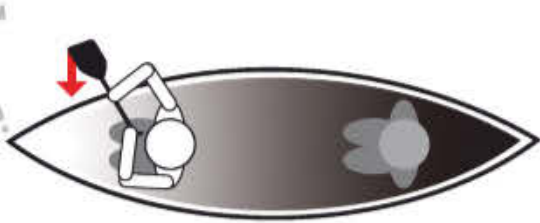
Rudder

The stern paddler rudders to turn the boat to the paddle side. Dip your blade at your hip and brace it against the gunwale.



Sweep

The stern paddler uses the sweep to turn the boat away from the paddle side. Reach as if to forward stroke. Instead of pulling the blade straight back, trace an arc away from the boat.



Draw

Use this stroke to make quick adjustments from the bow. Reach over the gunwale and dip the blade so it faces the boat. Pull it straight toward you—the bow will turn to that side. To go the other way, cross-draw: Twist to reach over the opposite gunwale without swapping hand positions and pull.

Ready to hit the water? Get the gear on page 60.



ENJOY HIKEING WITH WET FEET

Can two hikers keep their feet happy while splashing through creeks for days?
By Adam Green

COLD WATER CHURNED around my thighs and threatened to knock me over as I shuffled across Forney Creek. It was early spring in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the current was high and swift thanks to a spate of recent rains. I paused, clinging to a fallen tree for stability, and felt the cold water gushing through my shoes.

Like many hikers, I avoid sloshing through creeks. Conventional trail wisdom says that wet feet are blister- and fungus-prone. I internalized this early in my backpacking career. In the name of foot care, I've searched off-trail for the driest passages and even donned bread bags over my socks. Risky leaps between widely spaced stones? I've taken too many to count. When waterproof boots aren't sufficient, I switch in and out of sandals for every crossing. It's effective—but painfully slow.

This time was different. Tired of the tactical gymnastics of keeping my feet dry, I decided to simplify the process. I wanted to hike as efficiently as possible, and heading straight through water is faster than avoiding it—if there's no foot health penalty.

My friend Glenn and I had been eyeing a three-day, 30-mile hike in the southern

Smokies. The loop tagged the highest point on the Appalachian Trail and offered long views over the park's namesake mountains. But it also required nearly a dozen river crossings with precious few footbridges or rock-hopping opportunities to spare our feet from submersion. Daytime temperatures looked to be mild, so the timing seemed right to take the plunge.

"There are six more crossings coming up," Glenn said. He had climbed the opposite bank after the inaugural foot soaking and was studying his map. Despite the comfortable spring weather, my feet were cold, and I was starting to feel less sanguine about the whole experiment. By tomorrow, we'd have constellations of angry blisters. I just knew it.

But I'd taken some precautions. One was slathering my feet in Chamois Butt'r anti-chafing lubricant. I also packed light, figuring every extra ounce in my pack would put strain on my feet and increase blister risk.

For footwear, waterproof boots were a no-go. Overtopping them, which was inevitable on this route, would render waterproofing worse than useless, as liners trap moisture and dry slowly. I needed something lightweight. My mesh trail runners

fit the bill. As for socks, the thick, cushioned ones I usually hike in would absorb too much water. I opted for thin, merino-and-nylon socks.

My shoes felt heavy as I emerged from the first crossing. Instinctively, I started to unlace them to dump them out, but what was the point? More crossings awaited. I'd braved solo trips in bear country and dodged rattlesnakes and ill-tempered feral hogs—surely I could handle a little water.

We splashed through creek after creek. Plowing straight through them was fun and let us cover the miles faster than if we'd stopped to change footwear. I crossed my fingers for the survival of my feet and rambled up the trail.

After pitching our tents and building a fire, we removed our shoes and held our feet to the flames. The skin was pruned and clammy, but there were no blisters—yet. My planning seemed to be paying off. But sores were only the first of my concerns. I knew that prolonged exposure to moisture could lead to a fungal infection called trench foot. Before slipping on fresh socks for sleeping, I rubbed Gold Bond on my feet. Dry and snug under my sleeping quilt, I started to doze.

That night, a thunderstorm rolled in. Harsh winds and heavy rain battered my

tent and drenched the landscape. In the morning, the air hung thick with humidity. I smeared more anti-chafing goo on my feet and slid into a dry pair of socks. Then, I put on my cold, soggy shoes and started hiking.

“How are your feet?” Glenn asked. Our pace was brisk as we headed down from Clingmans Dome on a section of the AT. “They don't hurt at all,” I said. By now, my inherent fear of blisters was subsiding. I was more than halfway through the hike and hadn't felt so much as a hot spot.

The next morning, we booked it the final 6 miles to the trailhead and emerged from the Smokies blister-free. I can't say if it was the lightweight trail runners, the end-of-day Gold Bond, or the anti-chafing ointment that made the difference. I like to think it was all three—and remaining vigilant about my feet throughout the day. Either way, there are more soggy hikes in my future. 🌊

THE VERDICT

PASS

We hiked with wet feet for nearly 30 miles and our feet didn't fall apart. Soggy shoes felt uncomfortable at first, but splashing through creeks like wild animals was liberating.



PREPARE FOR THE PLUNGE.

Choose quick-dry footwear.

Waterproof boots aren't your friends when you're up to your knees in water. Thin, breathable trail runners dry out much faster.

Pack extra socks.

Always bring at least three pairs of quick-drying socks. Hang wet socks on the outside of your pack during the day.

Embrace skin care products.

Rub Body Glide or Chamois Butt'r on your feet each morning to minimize friction. A coating of end-of-day Gold Bond helps absorb any remaining moisture, especially between your toes. With a diligent foot care routine, wet-feet hiking is sustainable, even for long-distance treks.

Listen to your feet.

When your body gives you feedback, take its advice. Tend to hot spots immediately. Dry and clean your feet at the first feelings of itching, pain, or numbness, which can be indications of trench foot.

HONEY STINGER
FUEL FOR EVERY ADVENTURE
**BEFORE.
DURING.
AFTER.**

ORGANIC WAFFLES • GLUTEN FREE ORGANIC WAFFLES • ENERGY BARS
ORGANIC ENERGY CHEWS • ENERGY GELS • PROTEIN BARS • ORGANIC CRACKER BARS

STOP, DROP, AND ROLL TO RECOVERY

Use pressure-point stretching, known as myofascial release, to loosen key hiking muscles and boost recovery. *By Meg Atteberry*



Leg Rolls

Use a water bottle (or travel foam roller) to target your quads and restore flexibility after a long day on the trail.

Sets 3 per leg | Reps 5 rolls (back and forth is one roll)

1. Lay on your stomach with the water bottle or foam roller beneath your left quad. Start with it placed just above the knee.
2. Keeping your legs straight, use your feet and arms to roll back and forth over the entire length of the muscle. Keep three points of contact with the ground (where your leg rests on the bottle counts as one). To deepen the stretch, bend your left knee so that your foot is pointing upward.
3. Complete 5 rolls, then repeat on the right leg.

IMPROVISE

Use What You Have

Most hikers don't pack a foam roller, but almost everyone has a hard-sided water bottle. If the plastic or metal feels too tough on your tired muscles, Fog-Wiltse recommends wrapping the bottle in a piece of clothing or a camp towel before using it to roll out. As long as you take care not to roll over joints or bones, using a bare plastic bottle is also safe. No lacrosse or massage ball? A round river stone wrapped in a shirt won't work for rolling, but it can be used for static stretches like the seated figure four.

THE EXPERT

Personal trainer
Robyn Fog-Wiltse
runs Sasquatch
Training and coached the first
American below-the-knee
amputee to summit Mt. Everest.



Shoulder Trigger Points

Massage your medial subscapularis (between your spine and shoulder blades) to relieve tightness caused by carrying a heavy pack.

Sets 3 per shoulder (1 at each location)

Reps Hold each side for 60 seconds.

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the ground. Place a lacrosse or massage ball along the inside edge of your left shoulder blade under the muscle. Start at the upper part of the blade.
2. Use your legs to slide laterally and vertically a few inches until you find a tender spot. Hold there for 60 seconds until your muscles relax.
3. Repeat with the ball placed at mid-shoulder blade, then lower shoulder blade. Do the same sequence for your right shoulder.



Seated Figure Four Ball Stretch

Massage sore glutes, lower back, hips, and your sacroiliac joint—where your pelvis meets your spine—with this static stretch.

Sets 1 per side | Reps Hold each side for 30 seconds, working your way up to 1 minute.

1. Sit with a lacrosse ball under your left glute, ensuring the meaty part of your buttocks is in contact with the ball. Bend your knees and keep your feet flat on the ground. Brace your right hand behind you.
2. Lift your left leg and place your left ankle on your right thigh, above the knee.
3. Sitting upright, lean toward your left shin. Gently press down on the lifted knee with your left hand. Hold for 30 seconds, then repeat with the right glute.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER SUCHESKI



15:37

BORESTONE MOUNTAIN

45.3770° N, 69.4038° W

WE CAME ACROSS FRESH MOOSE SCAT.
STEPPED IN, IS MORE LIKE IT.



BE ORIGINAL. BE INSPIRED AT VISITMAINE.COM

Maine

JOURNEY

NO. 34

HIGHLANDS REGION

Talk about the path less traveled. We ventured off in so many different directions. And our conversation did as well. I think I learned more about a few things than I needed to. Sometimes we talked, other times we just stopped in our tracks and took it all in. Sensory overload in the best possible way. When we reached the peak—total silence. Nothing needed to be said. This was something I'd never felt. This is me.



Adjust the Sriracha-to-soy sauce ratio for a customized kick.

PEANUT BUTTER DREAM

This backpacking staple can do more than make sandwiches.
By Siena Fry

THAI PEANUT NOODLES

Even ramen is better with peanut butter. *Serves 2*

- ½ cup** peanut butter
- 2 Tbsp.** Sriracha
- 2 Tbsp.** soy sauce
- 2** packages ramen noodles
- 1** red bell pepper, dehydrated or fresh
- 1** head broccoli, dehydrated or fresh
- 1** lime

AT HOME → Combine peanut butter, Sriracha, and soy sauce in a leakproof container (adjust ratios according to taste). Pack other ingredients separately.

IN CAMP → Cook noodles according to packaging. Meanwhile, chop or rehydrate veggies, then cook in a separate pan. In a bowl or pot, mix

peanut sauce and juice from lime. Stir in water until sauce is the consistency of ketchup. Add hot noodles and veggies to sauce and stir until combined.

WEIGHT* 15 oz.

CALORIES 847

PROTEIN 24 g

PB CHEESECAKE BALLS

Protein powder adds substance to this decadent dessert. *Serves 2*

- 1 Tbsp.** vanilla protein powder
- 3 Tbsp.** dark-chocolate chips
- ½ cup** rolled oats or granola
- 3 Tbsp.** crunchy peanut butter
- 3 Tbsp.** shelf-stable cream cheese

AT HOME → Mix protein powder and chocolate chips in a zip-top bag. Place oats in plastic wrap

and add bundle to the bag. Pack peanut butter and cream cheese together in a leakproof container.

IN CAMP → Whip peanut butter and cream cheese in container. Add protein and chocolate mixture and mix well. Shape into six 1-inch balls and roll in oats, then serve.

WEIGHT 3 oz.

CALORIES 336

PROTEIN 14.5 g

PB&J PANCAKES

Turn this classic combo into a hearty breakfast. *Serves 2*

- 4 Tbsp.** milk powder
- 2 Tbsp.** whole powdered egg
- 1 cup** flour
- 3 tsp.** baking powder
- ½ tsp.** salt
- 1 Tbsp.** sugar
- 3 Tbsp.** peanut butter
- ½ cup** strawberry jam
- ¼ cup** maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp.** vegetable oil

AT HOME → Mix dry ingredients in a zip-top bag. Package peanut butter, jam combined with syrup, and oil in separate leakproof containers.

IN CAMP → Melt peanut butter over low heat in a small pot. Stir in 1 cup cold water then dry ingredients to make batter. Warm oil in a frying pan over medium heat and cook pancakes like normal. Transfer them to a plate or bowl. In the empty frying pan, warm jam-maple syrup mixture over low heat. Pour over the pancakes and serve.

WEIGHT 7.5 oz.

CALORIES 860

PROTEIN 19 g



Elevate your camping meals by enrolling in our **Backcountry Kitchen** online course with Colorado Outward Bound instructor Siena Fry. Visit backpacker.com/backcountrykitchen.

*ALL NUTRITION AND WEIGHTS ARE PER SERVING. WEIGHTS ARE FOR UNCOOKED INGREDIENTS.

HOT TOMATO

In my younger (and dumber) days, some friends and I thought it would be funny to leave a large, sealed can of tomatoes in our campfire until it exploded. When the blast went off, it sent coals soaring through our campsite in a 20-foot radius. No one was injured, but there were some burn holes left in clothing, and we spent half an hour stomping out the embers. How can I atone for my mischievous youth? *-Pyromaniac in Portland*

Dear Pyro,

Congratulations, you managed to hit the trinity of backpacking no-nos: leaving a trace, taking unnecessary risk, and wasting food. Not only did you tempt shrapnel wounds, but you risked starting a forest fire. Plus, the tomato blast radius probably attracted wildlife to your campsite. You

should never burn anything besides wood in an open pit—it takes extreme heat to eliminate traces of food, and animals often scavenge from campfire rings (this is bad for the critters and for future campers). Furthermore, humans have started 84 percent of wildfires in the U.S. over the past two decades, leaving more than a million acres scorched

each year. Stick to the camp stove for cooking, and always open your cans before heating.

DO THE RIGHT THING

Since your actions had the multiple consequences of wildfire risk and animal attraction, we'll assign a two-part penance: Pack canned beans—no dehydrated food allowed—on your next

backpacking trip, and forego campfires for the rest of the summer. Be safe out there.

Got an LNT confession? Email confessions@backpacker.com.

For more information about reducing your impact, visit LNT.org.

 JAMES DECKER



sleep in the dirt, don't sit in it

simple, innovative, ridiculously comfortable

NEW MICA BASIN AND SKYLINE CHAIR AND STOOL FEATURING
PATENTED HUB-LESS FRAMES, WIDE AND STABLE SEATS AND
SIMPLE SETUP AND BREAKDOWN

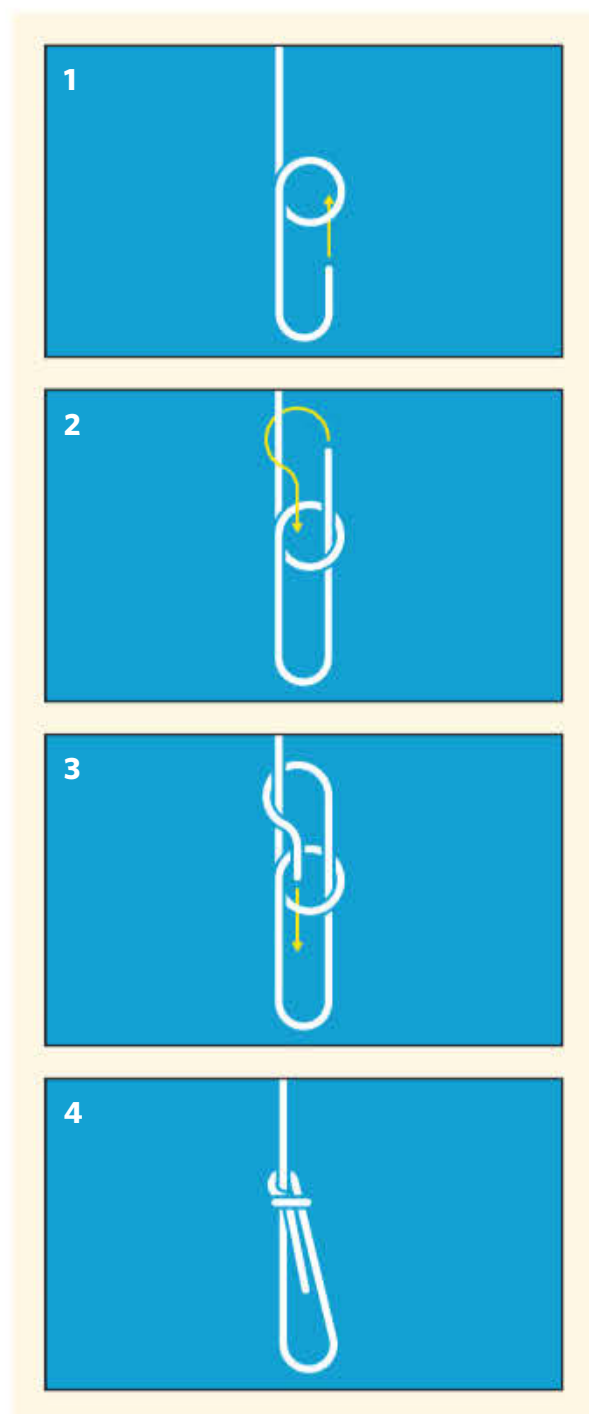


The Mother of Comfort • bigagnes.com

Camping above Montezuma Basin
on the Continental Divide Trail,
Colorado. Noah Wetzel

TIE THE KNOT

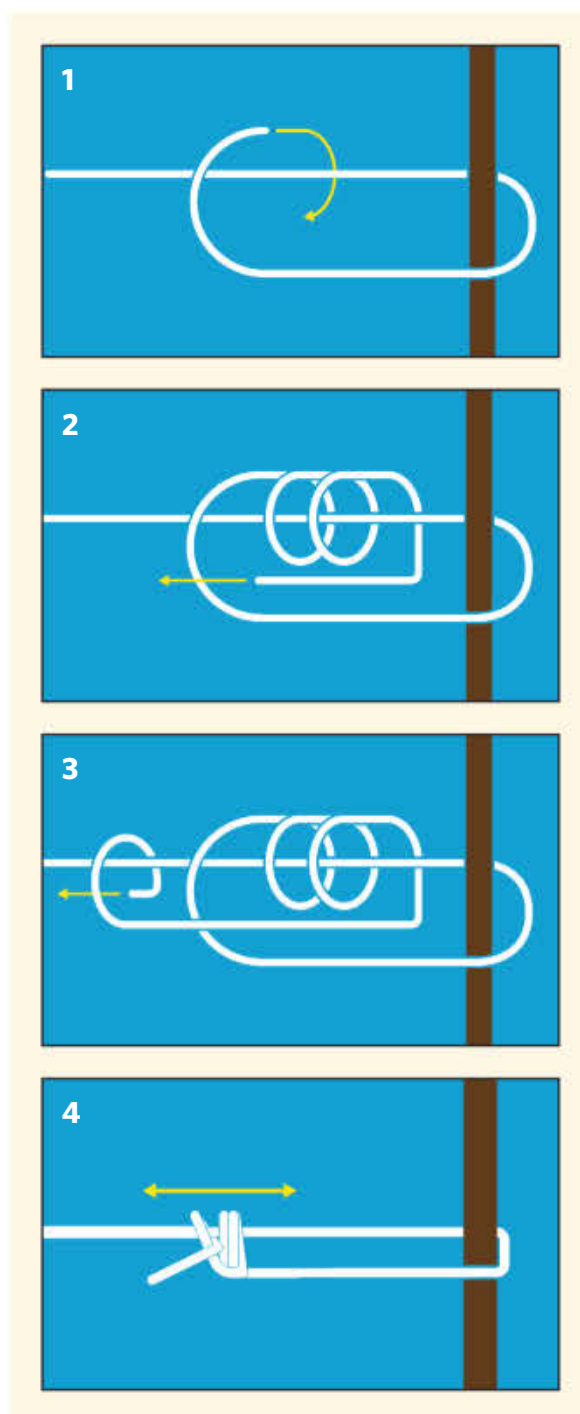
With some cord and a little know-how, you can rig shelters, fix broken gear, hang your food, and so much more. Master these three essential knots to get started. *By Zoe Gates*



BOWLINE

Best for: making a loop, hanging a hammock, or lowering a pack

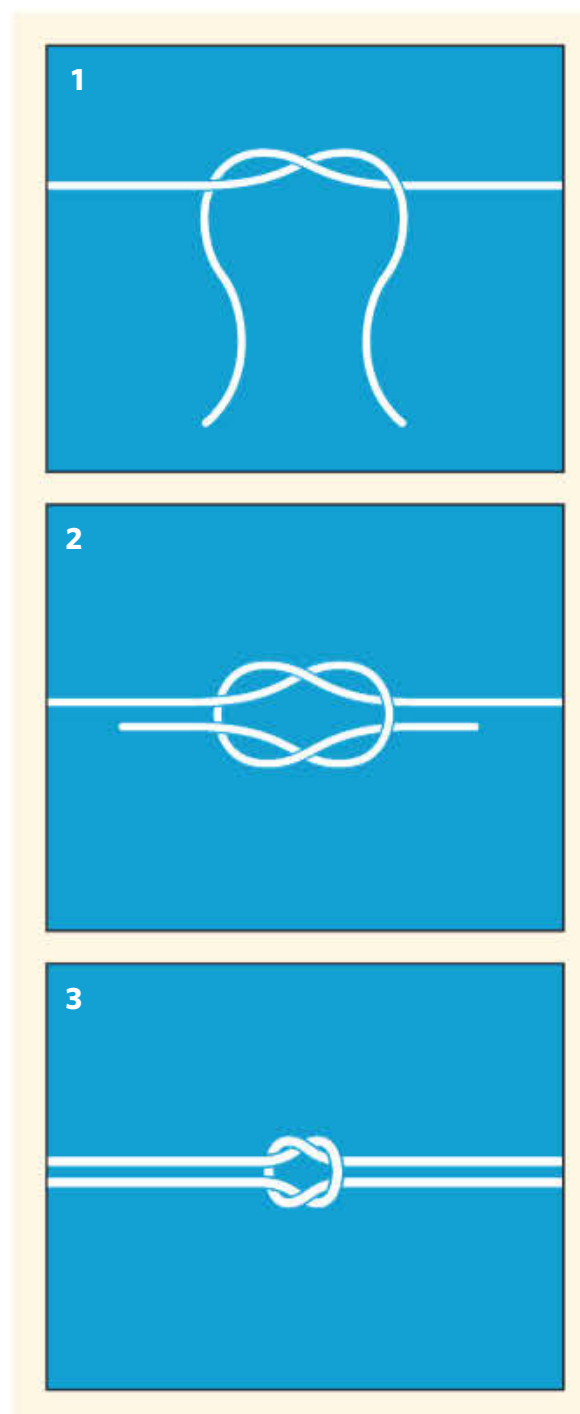
1. Begin by crossing the working end (the free end) over the standing part (the long, fixed end) to create a loop.
2. If anchoring to an object, bring the working end around that object before proceeding. Pass it up through the bottom of the loop.
3. Wrap the working end around the standing strand, then pass it back down through the loop.
4. Pull tight.



TAUTLINE HITCH

Best for: rigging adjustable anchors that slide up or down the guyline of your shelter to fine-tune the tension

1. Loop the line around the anchor point and cross the working end over the standing part.
2. Pass the working end around the standing part twice, wrapping each additional loop in toward the anchor.
3. Bring the working end away from the anchor and loop once more on the outside of the first loop. Tuck the tail in a half hitch.
4. Pull tight and slide to adjust tension.



SQUARE KNOT

Best for: joining two strands of equal or unequal thickness, improvising a hipbelt, or connecting the ends of the same cord

1. Cross the two strands, with the left wrapped over and under the right.
2. Wrap what is now the right working end over then under the left.
3. Pull tight. If your knot is symmetrical, you've tied it correctly.



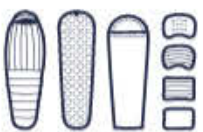
All tangled up? Sign up for our online course for expert video instruction on 15 knots and their applications. Visit backpacker.com/knotscourse for more info.

**YOUR
ADVENTURE
YOUR
CHOICE**

850+ DOWN SPARK & FLAME

The ultimate **super
lightweight, compact,
high performance**
sleeping bag

BUILD YOUR
**SLEEP
SYSTEM**



VISIT [SEATOSUMMIT.COM](https://seatosummit.com)

Unisex Spark III
weighs 1 lb 7.5 oz

Women's Flame III
weighs 1 lb 7.5 oz



MAXIMUM INSULATION VALUE

High loft 850+ premium goose
ULTRA-DRY™ Down. Impressive
warmth to weight ratio.

ETHICALLY SOURCED DOWN

All Sea to Summit bags use
Responsible Down Standard
(RDS)-certified down.

ULTRA-LIGHT, ULTRA-COMPRESSIBLE

850+ down, a 10D Nylon shell,
7D lining fabric, light gauge zippers
in a contoured mummy shape for
a ridiculously light, tiny packed size.





CHASED BY A FLASH FLOOD

For J.P. Rose, 34, and Christina Fialho, 35, an idyllic dayhike in the Caribbean in 2017 turned into a nightmare. *By J.P. Rose*

WITHOUT WARNING, a violent blast of water and debris erupted over the falls toward me, transforming the dreamy swimming hole into a churning monster. The river, which had been emerald minutes ago, was suddenly a dark and muddy torrent. I called out to my partner, Christina, but my shout was drowned out by the noise.

It was late afternoon on Basse-Terre Island in the French West Indies, and until that moment, it was another day in paradise. The weather had been nearly perfect for November—sunny skies with occasional showers. A few hours before sunset, we decided to hike to Acomat Falls, tucked half a mile into the rainforested mountains near Guadeloupe National Park.

Heavy rain began to fall as we arrived at the trailhead, so we decided to wait for five minutes. Sure enough, it stopped and we set off down the muddy path.

Christina and I are experienced hikers. We've explored California's Sierra Nevada and slot canyons in Utah, where we knew the importance of checking the weather for flash flood risk. But for some reason, it didn't occur to me that the same thing could happen on our tropical escape.

Expecting to spend no more than an hour at the falls, we wore T-shirts and swimsuits. I carried my phone, camera, and a mini tripod. We were on vacation and visiting a well-known spot, so I hadn't told anyone where we were going.

We hiked for 15 minutes through mud, roots, and hanging vines. After crossing the 10-foot-wide river at a shallow spot and walking upstream about 100 yards, we reached the falls—a 30-foot barrel of whitewater shooting over the rim of a granite basin. It was around 4 p.m. and only one other couple was there. We dove into the green pool and floated on our backs, looking up at the canyon walls.

By 4:30, the other couple had left. We knew we needed to head back to the car before dark, but I was waist deep in the river trying to photograph the falls, the hanging vines, and the dreaminess of the place. Christina was sitting on an outcrop of granite above the basin. I finally got a good shot—and then she screamed.

With a crack like thunder, a wall of brown water hurtled over the top of the falls, carrying fragments of trees and plants with it. *Flash flood.* I jumped out of the river seconds before the deluge crashed over the



Want more survival stories?
Listen to our new Out Alive
podcast (backpacker.com/Podcast).

spot where I'd just been standing. Christina scrambled barefoot off the boulder toward higher ground.

I raced up the rocks, which had been at least 10 feet above the pool's surface, just as the flood submerged them. Christina and I clawed our way up the canyon on all fours, grabbing vines to pull ourselves up. I looked over my shoulder and saw that the water had risen 20 feet in less than a minute.

Christina led us through dense brush, prickly trees, and ankle-deep mud. When we'd climbed 200 feet, we stopped to catch our breath. Now we had a different problem: The trail and the road were on the other side of the swollen river. We were stuck.

Then the sky opened up. We had no headlamp or rain jackets and were exhausted from the scramble. Christina asked if I had my phone. It was soaking wet, but still blinked on. No service. We decided to move toward higher ground to get a better signal. It was almost dark.

For a moment, the phone connected, and I heard the faint voice of Mae, our vacation rental host. She said she'd call for help. Then the phone went silent.

We had no idea whether rescuers could reach us. Christina found a hollow tree which we used as a partial shield from the

rain. We told each other not to panic as night set in, but I didn't know when or how we'd get off the mountain.

I tried to send more texts to Mae, but most of them bounced back undeliverable. There was nothing we could do but wait.

We tried to convince each other that we couldn't possibly get hypothermia in the tropics, but our wet bodies were starting to disagree. We'd been stranded for nearly four hours. Shivering, we huddled closer for warmth. It was pitch-black and the mosquitoes were out, feasting on our scratched and bruised skin.

After another hour, we saw faint lights across the canyon. But no one in their right mind would try to cross the river that night. I didn't see how else we would get out—there were no roads, and the sky was blocked with a dense canopy of trees.

My wet phone had begun to lose function, but the flashlight still worked. I turned it on and shone it at the canopy above as a signal. The ghostly glow barely registered against the dense vegetation.

Then I heard the blades of a helicopter. In minutes, the trees were thrashing in the wind generated by the aircraft. A cable appeared through the canopy, and then a rescuer. We were safe. 🚁

Skill
School

FLASH FLOOD AWARENESS

Tim Knaus is the Plateau District Ranger and a lead member of Search and Rescue in Zion National Park, where flash floods are common.

Watch the conditions.

"Rain can occur upstream of your location, so flooding can happen even when there are blue skies above you," Knaus says. Check weather forecasts before heading out and always heed the advice of rangers.

Recognize warning signs.

Beware of water turning murky, a rush of air travelling down a canyon, rumbling sounds, and the smell of dirt. If you detect any of the above, seek high ground immediately.

Know when you're in flood territory.

"Narrow canyons, large catch basins, sparse vegetation, a thin soil bed, and swaths of solid rock contribute to flash flooding," Knaus says. Vegetation wrapped around trees and scarring on one side of their trunks are signs that flash floods have struck there before.



The Lounger SL Chair combines high-profile comfort with low-profile seating and lacks nothing when it comes to strength and stability. The breathable mesh seat keeps you comfortable on the warmest days, and its shock-corded aluminum frame ensures easy assembly. The lightweight, compact Lounger SL is your perfect companion from campsite to festival.

Lounger SL
Chair



MAKE : TIME FOR MUDDY SHOES



Removable  active shield
compartment included



Available in 22" & 30"

Roll out with the new **QUADRO PRO**

Take your adventure off the beaten path for some good, old fashioned, not-so-clean fun. Our new Quadro Pro roller divides your dirty gear from your clean with an extra layer of ActiveShield protection. Kick up some dirt, dive into the water, scrape your knees, and roll around in the grass. Like we've always said: a little dirt never hurt.


GREGORY.
≡ GREGORYPACKS.COM ≡

Field Test

GEAR PICKS AND TIPS

UP AND AT 'EM

Putting the SCARPA Ribelle Tech OD (page 54) through its paces in Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

Lace up for alpine objectives with the year's best three-season mountaineering boots. Plus: Choose the right canister stove, get set for summer paddling, and save weight with an ultralight tent.

Mountain Movers

Going up? On routes that require more than just your standard hiking footwear, these boots will keep you on track.

By Heather Balogh Rochfort

1

OVERALL
4.3



2

OVERALL
4.2



3

OVERALL
4.1



4

OVERALL
4.0



5

OVERALL
3.9



ALL WEIGHTS ARE PROVIDED BY THE MANUFACTURER FOR SIZE MEN'S 9 UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

PHOTO BY TRANG LE

1. MOST COMFORTABLE

SCARPA Ribelle Tech OD

Great flexibility means no-problem approaches.

COMFORT ▶ 4.9 The Ribelle Tech OD is a unique-looking boot, with a high mesh gaiter that provides more debris protection than support. The lack of a true cuff results in lots of ankle flex and, combined with the most pronounced toe rocker in the test, creates a natural stride: “I was even able to jog in this boot when I had to hoof it back to my car to get to work after an early morning outing in Rocky Mountain National Park,” one tester says. The tongueless design also cuts bulk while maintaining weatherproofing. PrimaLoft insulation kept testers’ feet warm down to 20°F. Ding: It’s the most expensive boot here.

DURABILITY ▶ 4.4 The Ribelle benefits from the highest-in-test rand, the major reason the boot is in tip-top shape after 75 miles in the Alaska wilderness. The mesh lace protector has suffered some snags, but the laces look pristine.

STABILITY/SUPPORT ▶ 3.7 This boot is stiff enough to allow one tester to kick steps in soft snow on Alaska’s Ptarmigan Peak, but the lack of a true cuff means it isn’t ideal for using crampons on steeper, firmer snow.

\$540; 2 lbs. 6 oz.; m’s 6-12; scarpa.com

2. MOST DURABLE

LOWA Alpine SL GTX

A reinforced upper boosts protection and cuts ounces.

COMFORT ▶ 3.9 Sheet EVA (less dense than molded EVA or PU) in the midsole increases ground feel, but isn’t so thin that we bruised. “The midsole flexed enough for me to stay comfy during a 6-mile approach,” said one tester after a climb in Alaska’s Talkeetna Mountains. Tradeoff: We wanted more support with loads over 40 pounds. The Alpine SL is warm down to about 20°F thanks to its Gore-Tex Performance Comfort lining, which is used in six out of the seven boots we tested (see sidebar, page 56).

DURABILITY ▶ 4.8 Designers replaced a traditional rand with PU triangles that reach high up the boot,

protecting the synthetic upper from abrasion and cutting weight. “I’ve used this boot on 10 expeditions and it doesn’t show any wear at all,” said one Alaska tester.

STABILITY/SUPPORT ▶ 4.0 LOWA uses Vibram Litebase, which reduces the sole’s thickness without compromising durability or grip. “I climbed a 5.7 route with plenty of smearing and the sole gripped well,” one tester says. The Alpine SL’s full-length, carbon-fiber shank offers ample stiffness for cramponing up steep snow.

\$440; 2 lbs. 7 oz.; m’s 7-14; lowaboos.com

3. MOST TECHNICAL

Garmont Ascent GTX

This boot’s traction and stiffness shine on steep climbs.

COMFORT ▶ 2.7 A non-tapered toebox adds more space for splay, a boon on long days. But the Ascent is the stiffest boot in the test, so testers complained that it became uncomfortable on any approach longer than a couple miles.

DURABILITY ▶ 4.7 Toe and heel bumpers protected the suede upper during 30 days of talus- and scree-filled climbs in Idaho’s Pioneer Range. “I heel-braked all the way down a loose, gravelly slope and the outsole held up,” our tester says.

STABILITY/SUPPORT ▶ 4.8 The Ascent’s exemplary stability—the result of a nylon lasting board combined with a Vibram Nepal outsole, by far the stiffest in the test—means it excels on steep snow and rock. Our tester frontpointed up a 40-degree snow slope in the Pioneers with confidence. But the boot isn’t so overbuilt it’s ungainly: “With the laces cinched all the way down, I felt confident on knife-edge ridges despite the roomy toebox,” our tester reports. Padding in the cuff adds even more ankle support.

\$300; 2 lbs. 14 oz.; m’s 8-13; garmontnorthamerica.com

4. LIGHTEST

Mammut Taiss Light Mid GTX

This boot proves good support doesn’t have to be heavy.

COMFORT ▶ 4.2 The Taiss’s tongue is attached to the upper on one side,

creating a lateral entry that keeps debris out while limiting bunching. It’s made of Schoeller softshell (like the cuff), which also adds flex around the ankle. The boot runs slim, to improve precision and lower weight, but it occasionally caused cold toes. Still, the minimalist design worked great on quick approaches.

DURABILITY ▶ 4.0 Despite the sneaker-like weight, the Taiss proved durable. A raised rubber rand extends higher than normal, and a TPU adhesive protects the nylon upper’s seams, a common weak point in boots that take a beating.

STABILITY/SUPPORT ▶ 3.7 The Vibram Litebase sole (same as in the LOWA Alpine SL GTX) cuts weight and bulk, improving ground feel. A carbon plate in the midsole allowed one tester to easily scale a moderate snowfield in Rocky Mountain National Park while wearing semi-automatic crampons.

\$399; 2 lbs. 4 oz. (m’s 9.5); m’s 7.5-13, w’s 6-10.5; us.mammut.com

5. MOST VERSATILE

Salewa Raven 3

This do-anything boot excels all over the mountain.

COMFORT ▶ 4.4 The Raven 3 makes easy work of long hauls. A TPU-injected midsole is forgiving on feet but can still handle multi-day loads, and a foam-padded cuff adds cushion, allowing one tester to tackle a 7-mile approach to New Zealand’s 12,218-foot Aoraki via a dry riverbed. “I didn’t get any hot spots,” he reported after a summit day that covered 5,000 feet of elevation gain.

DURABILITY ▶ 2.8 The Raven 3’s rubber rand and TPU toecap protect the front and back of the boot, but its suede-and-nylon upper began fraying after a month of hard use.

STABILITY/SUPPORT ▶ 4.6 This boot’s nylon-and-fiberglass shank is the stiffest in the test (the Garmont Ascent’s outsole makes that boot stiffer overall), and it provides rigidity that can even handle vertical ice: “I soloed all five pitches and felt confident the entire time,” said one tester after climbing Utah’s Great White Icicle.

\$340; 2 lbs. 12 oz.; m’s 7-13, w’s 6-11; salewa.com



THE TESTING LIFE

“On an ice climbing expedition in Greenland, I had to set up camp in a whiteout. That made my task even harder: Punching holes in the ice for tent anchors with a power drill, all the while trying not to lose the location of the previous hole in the driving snow. Plus, it was -5°F and my feet were slowly going numb. I can safely say that getting into my tent that night was one of the most satisfying feelings I’ve had on a trip.”

—Scott Simper



6
OVERALL
3.9



7
OVERALL
3.7

6. WARMEST

Asolo Freney Mid GV

A plush interior makes this boot best for chilly ascents.

COMFORT ▶ 4.7 The Freney Mid's cushy lining and footbed mean its break-in time—almost instant—was the fastest in the test. “No rubbing, no hot spots, no slippage, and a snug heel fit,” one tester said after trekking 35 miles with a 40-pound pack in New Zealand's Arthur's Pass National Park. In rocky terrain, he appreciated how a large wedge of PU at the back cushioned heel strikes. The Freney Mid has a Gore-Tex Performance Comfort liner, and its almost fleece-like interior padding captured enough heat to keep one tester warm into the teens on a glacier in Greenland.

DURABILITY ▶ 2.7 After nearly a full month of use on steep and rocky terrain in New Zealand's Southern Alps, one tester noticed the Freney Mid's rand had begun to crack.

STABILITY ▶ 4.0 A carbon-fiber lasting board helps the Freney Mid remain stable on snow slopes while paired with semi-automatic crampons. Its Vibram Mulaz outsole with its single, large lug that curves

around the toe area allowed our tester to find footholds on small rock ledges in Arthur's Pass.

\$395; 2 lbs. 9 oz. (m's 8.5); m's 8-13; asolo-usa.com

7. BEST VALUE

La Sportiva Trango Tech GTX

The most affordable boot in the test is also durable.

COMFORT ▶ 3.9 A gusset-free tongue (it isn't attached to either side of the upper) allows an ample degree of movement around the ankle, but debris frequently sneaks inside. One tester found the boot's low-profile Vibram Cube outsole to be flexible enough to use the Trango Tech as a standard hiker in Montana's Hyalite Canyon, but the thinner-than-normal PU midsole is best with loads under 40 pounds.

DURABILITY ▶ 4.0 Thanks to minimal snagging points and a high, wraparound rand on its ripstop synthetic upper, the Trango Tech shook off two months of scrambling through scree and boulders across the Northern Rockies.

STABILITY ▶ 3.1 The PU midsole's rebound and the low-profile outsole result in agility on technical approaches, but the Trango Tech isn't stiff enough for steeper terrain. La Sportiva uses a Strobel last (a more flexible type of construction than the lasting board design used in every other boot in the test), so it feels more like a stiff backpacking boot than a technical mountaineering option. “It's great on snowfields up to about 35 degrees, but feels a little shaky on anything steeper,” our Montana tester says.

\$270; 2 lbs. 12 oz.; m's 6-13.5, w's 5-10.5; sportiva.com

TEST DATA

MILES
542

TOTAL VERT
102,000 FT.

HIGHEST ELEVATION
12,362 FT.
Flattop Mountain, Colorado

COLDEST TEMP
-10°F
Rainbow Peak, Alaska

GORE-TEX PERFORMANCE COMFORT

▶ This liner, found in all but the SCARPA Ribelle Tech OD, provides waterproofing and light warmth. Performance Comfort is a four-layer laminate: lining on the inside followed by light insulation, a membrane, and a protective knit. It works well for three-season mountaineering boots that don't need the bulk of heavier insulation, and we found that it keeps feet warm to roughly 20°F.



THERE'S THIS PLACE *where* ADVENTURE FINDS YOU

DESTINATION
Missoula
MONTANA

Three rivers and seven wilderness areas meet in **Missoula, Montana**, a small town with enormous personality. It's an **outdoor enthusiast's haven**, pulsating with **arts, culture, food, drink**, rich roots and the best people around. Infinite exploration abounds, so get outside under **Missoula's big sky** and experience this place for yourself.

Call **1.800.526.3465** or visit **destinationmissoula.org/backpacker** for a free travel guide.

To hone your paddling skills, see Adventure U (page 40). Find your perfect route at backpacker.com/paddlingtrips.

FLOAT YOUR BOAT

Gear up for summer trips on all types of water. *By Eugene Buchanan*



PACKABLE CRAFT

Advanced Elements AE1007-E AdvancedFrame Convertible Elite

Inflatable boats have long been a solution for storage-challenged paddlers, but they don't perform quite as well as hardshell craft. The AE1007-E narrows the gap with two key design features: a stiffer-than-normal floor and aluminum ribs, which help with speed and tracking. We appreciated the stability on the choppy waters of the Colorado River. The kayak carries enough gear for a two-nighter, and it inflates in 10 minutes via a foot pump (\$39, sold separately). Its high-back foam seats are comfy during long paddling days. **\$999; 52 lbs.;** advancedelements.com

SAFE STORAGE BAG

Seattle Sports LocoDry Andale Navigator Roll Duff 35L

Forget top-loading drybags, which make gear hard to access. This duffle-style model has a wide mouth for easy gear grabbing, and it's tough, with 600-denier, urethane-coated polyester. At 35 liters, it will easily fit most tents, sleeping bags, and clothing, and it kept all of



that dry after we dropped it in the water near the Green River's Gates of Lodore. We also like the Roll Duff's multiple tie-down points and its cross-body strap with a silicone pad, which makes it comfortable on portages. **\$110; 1 lb. 6 oz.;** seattlesportsco.com



SLICK SPLASH JACKET

NRS High Tide

Changing layers is a pain with a PFD on, which is why we like this airy shell. Its proprietary 2.5-layer, water-proof/breathable material kept us from swamping out in temps up to 70°F. Thanks to its generous cut, the High Tide didn't limit movement when we bent forward for strokes, and its two 7-inch pockets on the upper arms are accessible when wearing a PFD. **\$150; 15 oz. (M); m's S-XXL;** nrs.com

BURLY CARRY CASE

Pelican G40 Personal Utility Go Case

In the event of a capsizel, the first thing you'll probably worry about after safety is your valuables. The waterproof G40 case can fit your phone, wallet, and other small electronics (in a compartment



under the phone tray), and it floats. A 'biner attachment keeps it close at hand, and rubber bumpers and an EVA lining protect everything inside. **\$40; 14.9 oz.;** pelican.com

LUXE LIFE JACKET

Kokatat Proteus

This PFD offers impressive comfort, thanks to stretch polyester and foam panels with slits that allow it to flex with your body when you paddle. The Proteus has four pockets (two zippered for things like sunscreen and pocketknives; two fleece-lined for your hands). The rear panel ends halfway down the back to accommodate a seat rest. **\$119; 2 lbs. (M/L); XS-XXL;** kokatat.com



EFFICIENT PADDLE

Aqua-Bound Sting Ray Hybrid

Save your arms with this lightweight, flatwater kayak paddle, which has medium-size, resin-and-fiberglass blades and a carbon shaft to reduce swing weight. The Sting Ray breaks down into two pieces for easy transport, and the click locks held strong even when we were pushing off from ice floes in Alaska's Resurrection Bay. **\$150; 1 lb. 15 oz. (82 inches); five sizes;** aquabound.com



ALL WEIGHTS PROVIDED BY MANUFACTURER

SASHA DIGIULIAN
WORLD CHAMPION ROCK CLIMBER
8 FIRST ASCENTS
30+ FIRST FEMALE ASCENTS

PAIN HAPPENS. SUFFERING IS OPTIONAL.

YOU TRAIN HARD AND SOMETIMES YOU HURT, BUT THAT WON'T STOP YOU. TRY NEW TIGER BALM ACTIVE BEFORE OR AFTER YOUR WORKOUT FOR PAIN RELIEF FROM MUSCLE ACHES & STRAINS.



TIGER BALM
ACTIVE

f i t TIGERBALM.COM

AVAILABLE AT SELECT **CVSHealth** **RITE AID** LOCATIONS.

Boil Battle

Our favorite canister stoves hit a sweet spot between performance, weight, and packability. For soloists and small groups, kitchen duty doesn't get any easier. *By Stasia Stockwell*



FASTEST

1. Primus Power Trail

There's no quicker way to dinner than with the Power Trail. It boiled water for a group of four in a flash, and its best-in-test simmer control delivered perfectly sautéed veggies at 9,000 feet in Colorado's Sawatch Range. The stove's 6-inch-wide arms easily support 3-liter pots, and its 2.9-inch burner head provides a consistent flame. Ding: The Power Trail's piezo igniter is finicky at best, so bring a backup lighter.

Boil time for 1 liter of water: 2:45*

Fuel efficiency: 18 grams for 1 liter of water
\$60; 5 oz.; primus.us

BEST ALL-AROUND

2. Jetboil Flash

The new Flash is lighter and boils water faster than previous iterations,

PHOTOS BY COURTESY

Brian Threlkeld | White Mountains, NH



goodto-go.com

CF V REAL FOOD.
REAL ADVENTURE.

Our handmade meals are what adventurers turn to for calorie-dense sustenance made from clean ingredients. Just add boiling water and in minutes you have a delicious meal.

making it a tester favorite among all-in-one cooking systems. This stove ignites quickly and consistently, with the most reliable piezo in the test. ("It never took more than one push," our tester says.) Strong wind gusts got through to the flame, though, and boil times slowed a bit in temps below freezing and at elevations above 8,000 feet. Bonus: If you prefer cooking in regular pots or pans, you can use an accessory pot support (not included, \$9) to do more

than just boil water.
Boil time for 1 liter of water: 3:25
Fuel efficiency: 11 grams for 1 liter of water
\$100; 13.1 oz.;
jetboil.com

LIGHTEST
3. SOTO Amicus
"This fist-size stove is small but mighty," one tester says. "I nearly lost it in my pack, but it still cranked out the BTUs near 10,662-foot Vail Pass in Colorado." There are tradeoffs for the miniscule size, though:

Despite a low wall around the burner head, wind still slowed cook times (though the stove never blew out). And large pots are unstable on the Amicus's small supports. But it does have a piezo igniter, and burns consistently in temps around freezing.
Boil time for 1 liter of water: 4:20
Fuel efficiency: 12 grams for 1 liter of water
\$45; 2.9 oz.;
sotooutdoors.com

BEST VALUE
4. GSI Outdoors Glacier Camp
Bargain-priced gear is not always a good buy, but the Glacier Camp cuts the right corners. Its 4.9-inch-wide arms support a 3-liter pot, and it maintained a consistent flame at 10,600 feet in Colorado's Tenmile

Range. The design, however, is fussy. "You have to twist and remove the arms from the burner head for storage—but doing so doesn't help it pack much smaller," one tester says. Further tradeoffs for the price? The Glacier Camp doesn't hold a flame well unless it's fully cranked, and it lacks wind protection and a piezo.
Boil time for 1 liter of water: 4:10
Fuel efficiency: 17 grams for 1 liter of water
\$25; 5.9 oz.;
gsioutdoors.com

BEST IN BAD WEATHER
5. MSR WindBurner
All integrated system stoves are decent when it comes to weather-proofing and efficiency, but if those two features are your priority, the

WindBurner is tops. We put it through 35-mph winds and sideways rain, and it maintained consistent heat and ignited on demand. Credit the metal wall that protects the heat exchange between the stove's burner and 1-liter pot. And a pressure regulator helps it perform at full strength even in cold temps or at high elevations—we saw no dropoff on 18°F nights above 11,000 feet. Plus, unlike the Jetboil Flash, the Windburner simmers uncommonly well, and it boasts the best fuel efficiency rating in the test. Bummer: No piezo, and you can't use non-integrated pots.
Boil time for 1 liter of water: 4:00
Fuel efficiency: 10 grams for 1 liter of water
\$150; 15.3 oz.;
msrgear.com

CANISTER VS. LIQUID FUEL

► Canister stoves like the ones tested here are easy to use and compact, but liquid fuel stoves also have their advantages. They perform better at high altitudes and in cold weather, and their increased fuel efficiency makes them ideal for long trips or for melting snow. White gas may also be easier to find than canisters in foreign countries. Cons: Liquid fuel stoves are heavier, more complicated, and usually more expensive.

*BOIL TIMES AND FUEL EFFICIENCY TESTS CONDUCTED IN A CONTROLLED INDOOR ENVIRONMENT AT 9,600 FEET WITH A 4-OUNCE CANISTER



Let us guide you on **your next big adventure** to one of our **mind-blowing destinations!**



New Zealand

South America

Himalayas

Europe

For expert local advice and a free destination brochure, call us on: **1 800 661 9073** or visit: **activeadventures.com**

MATERIAL LOVE

THREE ROLLS TO SAFETY

I wasn't ready for an emergency—but my gear was. *By Ryan Wichelns*

BUT WE'RE SO CLOSE. That's what I thought as the frigid water knocked me off balance, and I—along with my 60-pound pack—fell fully into the McKinley River. Behind me, my two hiking partners struggled to stay on their feet as well. My next thought—after I surfaced, gasping, and began retreating back to shore—was, *Thank god I remembered to close my drybag.* In big wilderness, you take comfort wherever you can get it.

I came to the Alaska Range for a three-week trek thinking I knew everything about the wild. Years spent backpacking in the Northeast and honing my mountaineering skills in the Cascades had built up my confidence. And so far, everything had gone to plan. I never strayed from my gear checks, reinforced each morning with the same ritual: rolling the top of my Sea to Summit Lightweight Dry Sacks three times to seal my clothes, sleeping bag, and electronics in a watertight embrace.

Now, with the impassable McKinley

River standing between us and the final day's hike to civilization, we were stuck. My confidence at the outset of our trip now felt like *overconfidence*. We were low on food and exhausted after three weeks of rough, off-trail hiking. And, with night approaching, we were something even worse: cold and wet.

Huddled on a gravel embankment under gray skies, surrounded by braids of water, we regrouped. Thankfully, we'd prepared our gear for this: We unrolled the sacks and got out our dry sleeping bags and slipped on dry parkas, then pulled out dry maps to find another way out.

It took us two days to reroute and navigate our way across the river. I emerged a bit hungry and with a recalibrated sense of confidence, but also with a valuable new outlook on adventuring in the wilderness: Sometimes nature lets the door hit you on the way out, and the difference between a good story and a dangerous accident can be as simple as three rolls of a drybag. 🐾



MIKE CARINA 🎨

LEKI

www.leki.com

The Micro Vario Carbon featuring LEKI's innovative ELD, External Locking Device. An ultralight, super compact folding pole with the performance and reliability you expect from LEKI.



Micro Vario Carbon



Photo: Stephen Matara

ELD External Locking Device

- User Friendly - a button releases the pole tension
- Special construction for even more stability and security



FIELD NOTES

The latest word from our testers

COZY COMFORTER

Western Mountaineering AstraLite Quilt

Most quilts, no surprise, have a reputation for leaking heat out the sides. But not this feather-weight number. Western Mountaineering has been making high-end down bags for 32 years, and its first foray into quilts follows the brand's DNA: premium 850-fill down, ultralight fabric, and a conservative rating. "I took this quilt past its temp rating in Dixie National Forest, Utah, down to 20°F, and had no trouble sleeping," one tester says.

At just 1 pound, 4 ounces the AstraLite is thru-hiker light, and it packs down to the size of a cantaloupe. Drawback: The pad connector system is overly futzy. **\$420; 1 lb. 4 oz. (regular); regular, long; 26°F; western-mountaineering.com**



LUXURY ACCESSORY

Sea to Summit Aeros Down Pillow

If you're looking to sleep better (who isn't?), look no further than this ultralight pillow. "It's so cushy that I almost feel guilty using it," one notoriously light-sleeping tester says. "But I'll never go back to sleeping on my dirty clothes again." The Aeros is topped with down that kept his head warm on a 15°F night in Spain's Pyrenees (the non-down-filled side of the pillow also has soft fabric if you prefer to keep a bit cooler), and its 4.7-inch thickness hides any trace of rocks underneath. It's a bit longer and wider than a loaf of bread, but packs down to the size of a kiwi. (The Aeros also comes in large and deluxe sizes.) A two-way valve makes it easy to inflate and deflate. Caveat: price. **\$60; 2.5 oz.; seatosummit.com**

FEATHERWEIGHT TENT

NEMO Hornet Elite 2P

The race to cut weight from shelters never seems to stop, and the Hornet Elite is one of the lightest full-featured offerings we've tested. At less than a pound per person, this double-wall, semi-freestanding tent still has double doors and vestibules, and its 27.3-square-foot floor is enough for two campers to sleep comfortably. There are concessions, though: "A crossbar at the peak improves head room, but I could only fully sit up right in the middle of the tent," one 5'9" tester says, citing the sloping walls. The vestibles are also too small to cook in. Still, the Hornet Elite brushed off 40-mph winds in Nova Scotia's Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, and our tester reports that there was no significant condensation on a rainy, 35°F night. Pitch is simple, with a standard hubbed-pole design in addition to the top crossbar. **\$500; 1 lb. 11 oz.; nemoequipment.com**



PHOTOS BY COURTESY

COMING TO A TOWN NEAR YOU BACKPACKER *Tour*

GET OUT MORE

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY

- 9** Quest Outdoors
Louisville, KY 6:30PM
- 10** Benchmark Outdoor Outfitters
Blue Ash, OH 6:30PM
- 16** REI, Washington, DC 6:30PM
- 18** REI, Boston, MA 6:30PM
- 19-20** Mt. Washington Observatory
Conway, NH All Day
- 24-28** FloydFest, Floyd, VA All Day

AUGUST

- 1** REI, Overland Park, KS 6:30PM
- 7** Sunlight Sports, Cody, WY 6:30PM
- 8** The Basecamp, Billings, MT 6:30PM
- 13** REI, Spokane, WA 6:30PM
- 14** REI, Olympia, WA 6:30PM
- 16-18** PCT Days
Cascade Locks, OR All Day
- 20** REI, Eugene, OR 6:30PM
- 21** Redding Sports LTD
Redding, CA 6:30PM

Look for the Get Our More Tour in
your area April–November 2019.



For tour schedule, dates and details visit **BACKPACKER.COM/GETOUTMORE**





TOTAL GRIP

ENGINEERED
IN THE DOLOMITES



ULTRA TRAIN 2

PAUL AND MAGDALENA GUSCHLBAUER - TELLURIDE, CO

Best Summer Ever

From swimming holes to wild berries, it's prime time for hikers. Tick off these 50 trips and experiences to make the most of the season.

By Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan

NO. 1
WAKE UP FAST.

Reach the Little Colorado River via the Salt Trail Canyon in Navajo Nation, Arizona.

NO. 2 RELAX.

No. 3 SOAK IN FIFTH WATER HOT SPRINGS.

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache
National Forest, UT

Looking
upcanyon from
Fifth Water Hot
Springs

THESE STEAMY TUBS stacked under a trio of waterfalls don't just *feel* heavenly: Minerals burbling up from the deep turn the pools bright shades of cobalt, periwinkle, and olive green, making them look pretty darn heavenly, too.

Your *au naturel* spa day is an easy, 2.3-mile (one-way) hike away. Start along Sixth Water Creek; at mile 1.1, cross the bridge to trace Fifth Water Creek into Diamond Fork Canyon. Follow the smell of sulphur to the

soaking pools, which begin 1.3 miles past the bridge. The underground hot springs mix with the chilly cascades to fill a terraced series of about a dozen pools, each augmented by rock walls built by previous bathers. They get hotter the farther upstream you go, so choose accordingly.

Soak season Year-round **Trailhead** Three Forks (40.0845, -111.3551) **Regs** None
Contact www.fs.usda.gov/uwcnf

4.



Forage the sweetest fruit.

Mid- to late summer means berries (all kinds) across the Lower 48. Snack straight from the bush (after checking local regulations) or gather enough for a backcountry pie:

- 1. Pack for a pie.** Bring: two 10-inch flour tortillas, two spoonfuls of jam (any flavor), and oil. Extra credit: Pack a baggie with a small handful of powdered sugar and pinches of nutmeg and ground cardamom.
- 2. Pick for a pie.** Pluck 1 or 2 cups' worth of berries.
- 3. Make a pie.** Heat oil in a frying pan over medium heat. While it's heating, spoon half of the jam into each tortilla. Add half the berries to each and roll into burritos. When the oil is sizzling, put the hand pies in the pan, fold facing down. Flip once so both sides are golden. Remove, coat with sugar mixture (if you went for it), indulge. —Zoe Gates

Summer + SCHOOL

By Lisa Jung

ASK MY KIDS if they want to go back to the classroom in summer, and you'll get a quick and loud "no way." And so, like any good mom, I trick them. Last June, we piled into the 4Runner with our camping gear and headed north from Boulder, Colorado. I told them we were going on a grand adventure—every good adventure teaches you something, right?



Eight hours later, we settled into a campsite in Grand Teton National Park, stopping at the visitor center to pick up Junior Ranger booklets. Their pages are chock-full of fun facts, quizzes, nature-based scavenger hunts, word searches, art projects—basically, a curriculum.

Back at camp, my 6- and 10-year-old boys immediately began *reading* about a glacier's ability to carve out a lake, and *writing* about the differences between black and grizzly bears. The subterfuge was working.

In Grand Teton, and then Yellowstone and Glacier, we tapped the friendly, knowledgeable park rangers who had an engaging way of explaining things like geothermal activity and complicated ecosystems. Through interpretive signs and movies at the visitor centers, my kids learned that bison are the biggest land mammals in North America and that surface water seeps down to magma-heated rocks before erupting from Old Faithful 17 times every day.

After mornings spent hiking or canoeing (P.E.!), the kids worked on their booklets. They drew animal tracks (science) and asked about the Native American names and lack thereof in Glacier (social studies). At night, we played blackjack (math), then ended the day strumming the ukulele and singing (music). Who says you need classroom walls to learn?

NO. 5 FEEL THE WIND UNDER YOUR FEET.

No. 6

LAUNCH INTO OAK CREEK CANYON.
Coconino National Forest, AZ

MAYBE IT'S A quirk of geology, or maybe it's Sedona's famed spiritual vortexes—but whatever the reason, this slice of slickrock country boasts some of the desert's best backcountry swimming. The water features here can draw a crowd, so target midweek to visit the mini-waterfalls, sandy beaches, and boulder-lined pools in Oak Creek Canyon. An easy-access road parallels the creek, but the best way into the chasm is the scenic approach on the Huckaby Trail, which delivers views of iconic Sedona sights like Steamboat Rock before reaching the stream at mile 1.5. A mile's worth of swimmable pockets line the waterway from here, so get sampling. Adrenaline add-on: Hike another .5 mile on the adjoining Allen's Bend Trail to Grasshopper Point, where a popular azure swimming hole sits below sandstone ledges that double as diving boards.

Swim season May to September **Trailhead** Schnebly Hill (34.8667, -111.7487) **Regs** \$5 parking fee or Red Rock Pass **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/coconino

Get big air at
Grasshopper Point.



Be smart: Scout water depth and check for hazards before jumping, and don't swim in or across fast-moving rivers.

NO. 7 GET MOTHER NATURE'S BEST FACIAL.

No. 8

HIKE TO ELY CREEK FALLS.

Dinosaur National Monument, CO/UT

BIGGER ISN'T NECESSARILY better when it comes to waterfalls, which this 15-footer tucked into a remote corner of Dinosaur National Monument proves. Standing under the cascade in summer feels more like a back massage than a knockdown pummeling, and the ankle-high pool at the base is safe enough for little ones to join the fun. Better yet? Because there are only two backcountry sites at the mouth of Ely Creek, it'll feel like your own private water park.

Hit the cascade at the midpoint of the easy, 4.3-mile Jones Hole Trail, which follows Jones Hole Creek through a gaping, orange canyon to the Green River. Scan for Fremont pictographs and petroglyphs on the walls near mile 1.5, then hike another half-mile to the campsites at the junction with the Island Park Trail. From there, it's a .3-mile walk west to the falls and 1.3 miles south to the beaches on the mighty Green, where bighorn sheep often gather.

Swim season May to September **Trailhead** Jones Hole Fish Hatchery (40.5886, -109.0586) **Regs** Permit required for backpacking (free; obtain at either visitor center). **Contact** nps.gov/dino



Getting a
refresh

No. 9

JUMP INTO THREE POOLS.

Willamette National Forest, OR

YEAH, YOU CAN REACH this trio of pools on the North Fork of the Santiam River from a parking lot. But splashing into their Caribbean-blue waters from the surrounding basalt walls feels all the more refreshing after you earn it. Forgo the overcrowded parking lot and get there on a 2-mile out-and-back from the Little North Santiam Trail that traces the opposite banks. At the pools, take the plunge from clifftops that range from mellow to foolhardy.

Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Santiam River East (44.8458, -122.2981) **Regs** \$5 parking fee or Northwest Forest Pass **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/willamette

Summer + SONG

By Liz Thomas

"SHOT THROUGH THE HEART, and you're to blame!"



Summer brings with it many lovely noises—twittering birds, rippling creeks, breezes quaking through the canopy, humming bugs, and, if you're in griz country, the sweet sound of my singing voice. Ten years in a touring choir, and now I belt out rock anthems to save my life.

The abandoned river paths of Canada's national parks are prime habitat for grizzly bears, and that's where I am, on the Great Divide Trail. Before my hike, a reluctant ranger eyed me and my hiking partner and warned, "No human should go there." We cleared our throats and hiked on, dodging steaming, berry-filled scat the whole way. When the trail disappeared, we pushed through drenched willows where grizzlies most certainly live.

But in 700 miles traversing the Canadian Rockies in midsummer, we saw just one bear. We saw plenty of evidence that this was their home, not ours, but, equipped with a memory's worth of sing-alongs, we seemed to create our own bear-free zone.

When I walked across Montana years before, a wildlife ranger advised, "Bears hate being startled. Sing. Let them know you're there." So I did then, and I do now. Turns out singing may be the best bear deterrent around—and it's also really fun. And sounds like summertime.

No. 10
PADDLE TO LITTLE TYBEE ISLAND.

Little Tybee Island State Heritage Preserve, GA

ON THIS UNTOUCHED lowcountry refuge, a smattering of sandy hardwood hammocks (slightly raised areas) and patches of salt marsh come together to form a primitive barrier island. And the whole 6,780-acre preserve's shoreline is open to camping—that's a lot of real estate for scouting a personal beach.

Launch a kayak from Tybee Island at low tide (grab a tide table and know how to read it; tidal changes here are extreme, ranging from 7 to 9 feet). Paddle about a mile across Tybee Creek for the quickest access to Little Tybee, scanning for ibises, herons, and ospreys above and dolphins below. When choosing a campsite, stick to the beach and steer clear of the sensitive dune habitats (BYO water).

Swim season April to October (but beware midsummer bugs).

Put-in Alley 3 Boat Launch (31.9933, -80.8538) **Regs** None

Contact exploretybee.com



Pack a pool toy for Little Tybee Island.

11.



Keep the bugs away.

Don't let 'skeeters ruin a summer evening in camp.

- 1. Pre-treat your gear.** Spray a layer of permethrin on your tent, rainfly, and clothing before heading out. Most treatments last long enough to repel mosquitoes and other pests all summer.
- 2. Get high and dry.** That lakeside campsite might seem appealing, but higher elevations (away from water) have fewer bugs. Ridelines with a nice breeze offer extra protection.
- 3. Gear up.** Dress in light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. When all else fails, raingear is your best armor.
- 4. Embrace your last resort.** DEET and citronella are your tickets to bug-free camping. —Z.G.

NO. 12
HIT THE BEACH.

No. 13
**COOL OFF IN
MAKALEHA
FALLS.**

Kealia Forest Reserve, HI

Makaleha Falls tumbles
into a swimming hole.

LIKE YOUR SWIMMING HOLES with a tropical flavor? Hidden in the lush folds of northeast Kauai, the double-decker Makaleha cascade tumbles through a blocky stone channel decked with electric-green ferns. Better yet is the perfectly invigorating pool (waist-deep to well overhead, depending on recent rains). Paradise, found.

It's no cakewalk to get there: Squeeze 2.6 miles through a dense, tough-to-navigate bamboo forest on an easy-to-lose trail, splash across Makaleha Stream a handful of times, and deal with epic mud along the way. The jungle opens up at the confluence of two creeks, revealing views of several cascades pouring off an emerald cliff face. Follow the northern drainage to reach the falls. High water makes the route hazardous, so avoid this one during and after heavy rains.

Swim season Year-round **Trailhead** Makaleha Falls (22.1023, -159.3854) **Regs** None **Contact** bit.do/kealia-forest-reserve

No. 14

CLAIM BEAR CREEK HOT SPRINGS.

Caribou-Targhee National Forest, ID

AT MANY HOT SPRINGS in the Rockies, chances are good you'll be sharing your soak with a neighbor or three. Not so at this quiet pool deep in the Caribou Range, where the long hike in, numerous stream crossings, and a brutal final climb keep the masses away. That leaves this bus-size hot springs to those made of sterner stuff.

To get there, follow Bear Creek 6.5 miles into the woods, crossing the stream at least a dozen times along the way (the water drops to about knee height in midsummer) and watching for moose and elk. The last mile climbs about 700 feet up along Warm Springs Creek into a grassy clearing in the Douglas fir forest where your tub awaits. Claim a nearby established campsite and soak the evening away.

Soak season Mid-July to September **Trailhead** Bear Creek (43.2761, -111.2324) **Regs** None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/ctnf

Summer + *SQUALL*

By David Gleisner

THE BOYS OF Carl Sandburg High's cross-country team were not experienced mountaineers. State champion runners, yes, but not ridge runners. This became clear on a summer training trip when we left our precious flatlands outside Chicago and ventured west to Rocky Mountain National Park for some elevation training.

We set our sights on the "CCY," a classic peakbagging route across the summits of 12,454-foot Mt. Chapin, 13,069-foot Mt. Chiquita, and 13,514-foot Ypsilon Mountain. As the newbies we were, we wore basketball shorts for the 8.1-miler and packed ponchos, which we hoped not to use.

By mid-afternoon we needed them. We'd climbed the first two peaks handily, stopping often to throw snowballs—in July! But on our last peak, the heavens gave way to a perfectly outrageous summer storm. I'd experienced thunderstorms in the Midwest, but nothing can compare to the mountain variety, which spring from purple-and-green skies pumped with electricity and gumball-size hailstones.

Not to be deterred (a good quality in cross-country running, but not in mountain climbing), we tagged Ypsilon's open, rocky summit block. Our thin, plastic ponchos did little to protect us from the pummeling ice balls, but luckily we made it back down safely.

I've learned a little about summer in the mountains since then—now I start early and head below treeline when the skies turn—but I'm still enamored by summer storms. There's nothing quite like a good mountain squall, hailstones and all. I have since upgraded my poncho, though.



No. 15

KAYAK TO BLAKE ISLANDS.

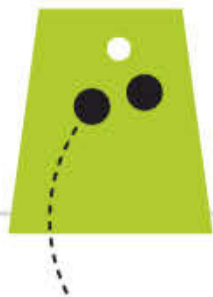
Umbagog Lake State Park, NH

IF BEING KING OR QUEEN of your own Northwoods island for a night sounds good, point your boat toward these conifer-covered twins near the southeastern shore of Umbagog Lake, a 10-mile-long tarn busy with bald eagles, loons, and moose. There, at site 32, you'll have sole claim to the Blakes' small, sandy shoreline. Come nightfall, retreat to a tent site under a canopy of pine, spruce, and tamarack within view of the water.

The paddle to the Blakes is half the fun: You can beeline it along the lake's eastern shore for a 2-mile trip, but the better route loops clockwise around Big Island for a 4.5-miler (one-way). En route, explore Big's rocky pockets, ledges, and scattered shoreline stone features, dipping in and out of Thurston Cove before heading east to the Blakes. (If site 32 is claimed, try for 34, on an unnamed island just east—it's equally private.)

Swim season July to September **Put-in** Park headquarters (44.7023, -71.0552) **Regs** Permit required for boatpacking (\$30/night; reserve a site at reserveamerica.com or try for a walk-in). **Gear rental** Canoes and kayaks are \$40/day on-site. **Contact** nhstateparks.org

16.



Play campsite bocce.

There's nothing lighter than a game you don't have to carry.

1. **Find level ground**, and mark off a 30-by-10-yard-or-so rectangle with rocks or sticks. (Dismantle after.)

2. **Take turns tossing baseball-size rocks toward the pallino** (golf ball-size rock) to see who can get closest. Feeling competitive? Find a full list of rules at backpacker.com/bocce. —Z.G.

No. 17

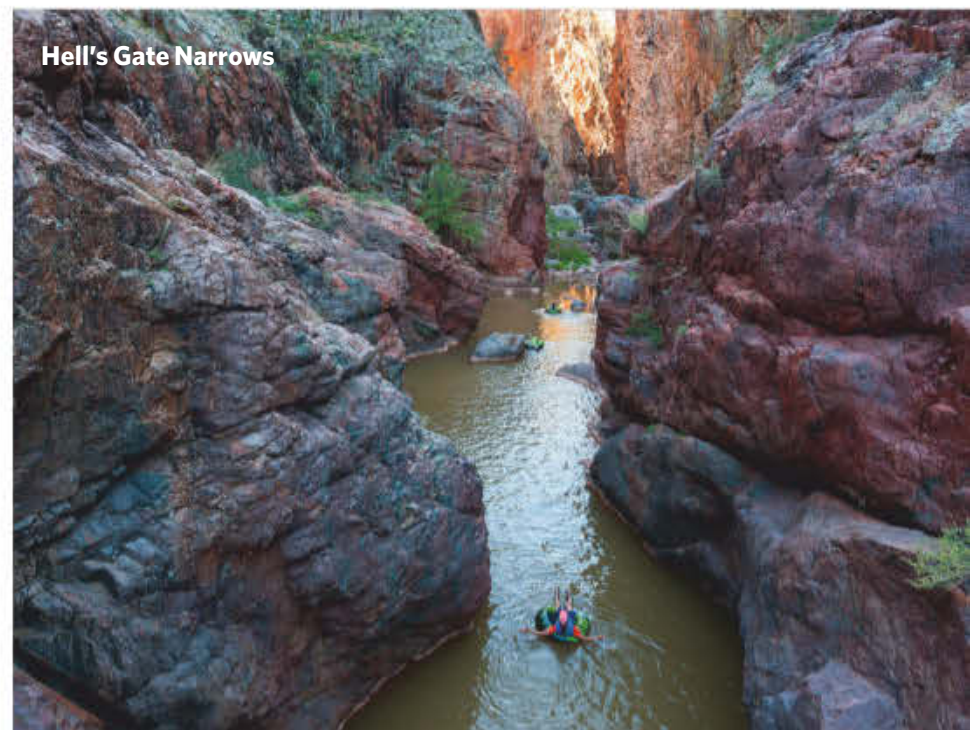
FLOAT TONTO CREEK.

Hellgate Wilderness, AZ

CLUB MED HAS nothing on the R&R waiting at the bottom of this trail. From your sycamore-shaded campsite at the confluence of Tonto and Haigler Creeks, you're a quick jaunt from where rosy-hued granite walls pinch the Tonto into a nearly impassable narrows—except to you, prone, on your inflatable sleeping pad, of course.

The float may be easy, but getting there takes some doing: The 8-mile hike on Hell's Gate Trail through manzanita- and juniper-filled slopes loses almost 2,000 feet in the final couple of miles to the creek, and the wilderness hosts rattlesnakes, black bears, and giant centipedes. Rewards are commensurate, though: Besides the tubing, you'll get a community pool-size swimming hole, a 7-foot waterfall, views of the Mazatzal Mountains, and sweet solitude.

Swim season April to October (but beware midsummer's sometimes-scorching temps and high flash-flood risk in rainy weather) **Trailhead** Hellgate (34.2798, -111.1367) **Regs** None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/tonto



Squeeze More Out of Summer

No.
18

Run a 10-mile trail.



no. **19**

Follow animal prints.



NO. 20
FIND ROCK ART.

1. Get off the beaten path. Some well-known panels of rock art are named and easy to find. But the best are the ones you discover by exploring the nooks and crannies of the desert Southwest. Wilderness areas in southern Utah and northern Arizona are the hot spots.

2. Know your art. Petroglyphs are made by chipping or carving away the patina, or desert varnish, on a rock's surface. Pictographs, which are painted on the rock using natural pigments, are less durable so usually found in areas that are protected from the elements.

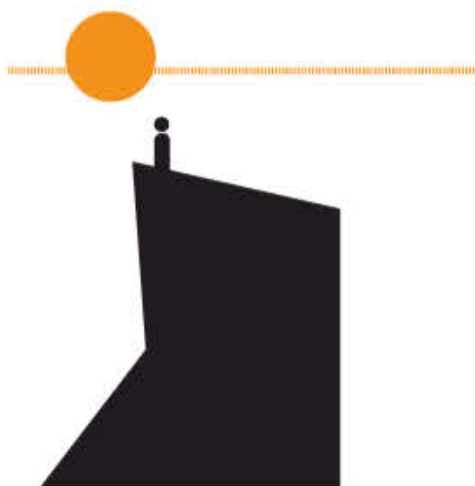
3. Leave no trace. Never touch rock art or do anything that could damage it.

4. Keep it secret. Found an unmapped, unGoogleable site? Congrats! Keep it to yourself so someone else can find it the same way you did.

No.
21
Hike for
24 hours.

no. **22**

Camp in a
wilderness where
you don't need
reservations.



NO. 23
**See the
sunrise
from a
summit.**

No. **24**

Glissade on a summer snowfield.

1. Check conditions. You want a moderate angle and settled, soft snow, nothing hard or icy.

2. Confirm a safe runout. If you can't see the bottom of the slope, don't slide. Rocks, a crevasse, or a drop-off could be hidden from view.

3. Remove excess gear. Take crampons off and stow them—they can catch and injure you.

4. Get in position. Sit upright, knees bent.

5. Use your ice axe. It works like a rudder to steer and brake. The pick should face away from your body. Drag the spike to slow down and turn.

6. Stop. Dig your heels in to stop. Going too fast? Roll over on your stomach and use your axe to self-arrest (don't attempt to glissade until you can do this). Know your personal speed limit.

No.
25
Throw a
backcountry
party.

No. **26**
Make margaritas
with summer snow.

No.
27
Do trail work.



no. **28**
Climb
a tree.



NO. 31
SLEEP UNDER
THE STARS.

1. **Set up your tent.** Just in case.
2. **Stay comfortable.** Clear rocks, sticks, and thorns to protect your sleeping pad. Pack a groundcloth.
3. **Stay dry.** Avoid valley bottoms and other low-lying spots where moisture collects.
4. **Stay sane.** If bugs are buzzing, retreat to your tent (see #1).

No.
33
Spend a day in
one place.

NO. 34
Cook
dinner
over
a fire.



No.
32
Skinny dip.

NO. 29
HIKE TO AN
UNNAMED
LAKE.

No.
30
Pack
swimming
goggles.



no. **35**
Bring a newbie on the trail.
(And show us on social with #takearookiehiking.)

1. **This is not your hike.** Adjust goals for your pal—this is not the day to target a huge peak.
2. **Start easy.** Pick a moderate route (5 or so miles and less than 2,000 feet of elevation gain for a dayhike).
3. **Make sure there's a payoff.** Views, wildflowers, lakes, swimming holes, and waterfalls suffice.
4. **Pack good food.** Some people think hiking is about deprivation. Prove them wrong.
5. **Do a gear check.** Don't let a newbie over- or underpack.
6. **Check the forecast.** Reschedule in case of rain or extreme temps.
7. **Go for a post-hike toast.** You both deserve it.

NO. 36 EXPERIMENT WITH GRAVITY.



No. 37
**SLIDE INTO
TULE RIVER.**
*Giant Sequoia National
Monument, CA*

Take your pick of
slides or diving
boards in the Tule.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE on the Tule, as every bend of the river hides a new waterslide, wading pool, or boulder-jumping spot sculpted from smooth Sierra granite. From the Stairs river access point, scramble up- and downstream the South Fork Middle Fork of the Tule to explore a series of mini-waterfalls and chest-deep rock tubs. Just west, near Lower Coffee Camp, the waterslides get steeper

and splashier. And a few miles north, along the North Fork Middle Fork, you'll find both tranquil pools and a few natural chutes, including the frothy, 30-foot-long Wishon Slide.

Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Unmarked trail about .5 mile up the Wishon Drive junction with CA 190 (36.1676, -118.7049) **Regs** None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/sequoia



38.

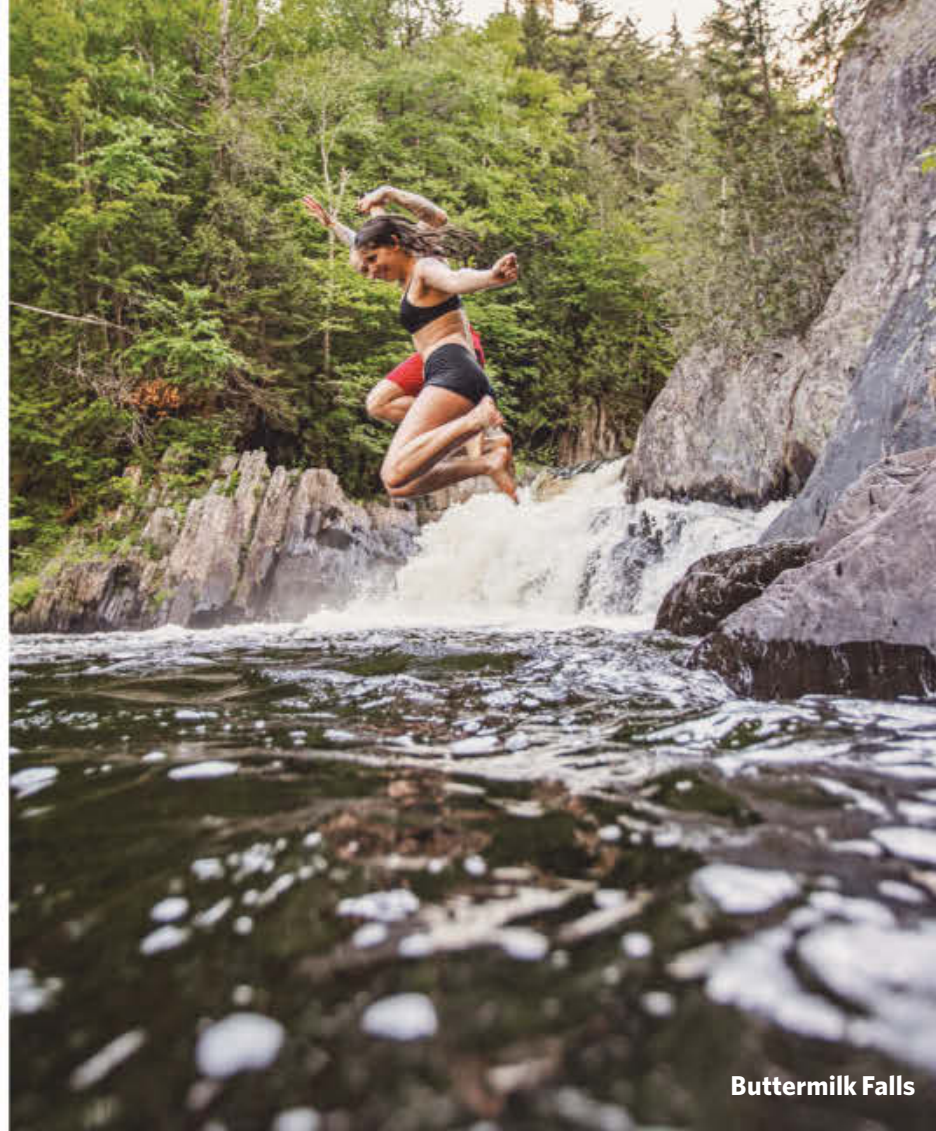


Keep your beer cold.

Find a mountain stream and you don't need a cooler that costs a paycheck. Here's how:

1. **Empty a stuffsack** and put your cans inside (never pack glass).
2. **Submerge the goods** in a river or stream. (Weigh down with rocks or tie off.)
3. **Wait an hour**—if you can. —Z.G.

PHOTOS BY (LEFT) ADAM MOWERY;
CHRIS BENNETT PHOTO



Buttermilk Falls

No. 39

SPLASH IN GULF HAGAS BROOK.

Hundred Mile Wilderness/Appalachian Trail Corridor, ME

CHOOSING THE BEST swimming hole in a gorge full of 'em is no easy task. Just off the AT in central Maine's moose-filled forests, the West Branch of the Pleasant River careens through a slate canyon, forming a chain of water features over about 3 miles. First up: Screw Auger Falls, a 26-footer on Gulf Hagas Brook that spills into a secluded pool (look for the mini waterslide just downstream). Next: Buttermilk Falls, a lacy pourover feeding a hardwood-framed pond. Then: Stairs Falls and Head of the Gulf—and the list of coves, bowls, and toe-dipping spots really does go on.

Decide for yourself on an 8-mile, lollipop-loop dayhike tracing the river. From the gorge's eastern trailhead, hike past 150-year-old white pines en route to the AT. Connect to the Rim Trail and start your research at Screw Auger Falls at mile 2.8. Pass the others as you loop back to the start via Pleasant River Tote Trail.

Swim season June to August **Trailhead** Hay Brook/Gulf Hagas (45.4777, -69.2850) **Regs** \$10/person entry **Contact** northmainewoods.org

No. 40

WINDING STAIRS

Ouachita National Forest, AR

DEEP IN THE furrowed topography of the Ouachita, the Wild & Scenic Little Missouri River kinks back on itself a few times to form Winding Stairs, a mile-long segment where clear, waist-deep water pools under hulking outcroppings. The best swimming is where Ravens Branch and Viles Branch Creeks pour into the river. Make it a 20-mile out-and-back on the Little Missouri Trail, paralleling the water under oak, elm, and old-growth pine. Camp at an established site in Winding Stairs.

Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Little Missouri Falls (34.4227, -93.9196) **Regs** None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/ouachita

Death Canyon makes
a nice backdrop.

No. 41
**GO BIG IN
PHELPS
LAKE.**
*Grand Teton National
Park, WY*

THERE ARE OTHER PLACES where you can launch yourself from on high into the water, but we challenge you to find one with a better backdrop than The Jumping Rock on Phelps Lake. Stand on the edge of the sheer-sided boulder that rests on the northeastern shore and you'll take in the yawning mouth of Death Canyon just across the water, framed by 10,552-foot Albright Peak and 11,241-foot Prospector's Mountain. Then jump 25 feet into the glacially fed lake, and for a moment, your mind will go blissfully blank.

You can reach The Jumping Rock on a 4.6-mile round-trip dayhike from the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve, but why just look at the magnificence of Death Canyon when you're right on its doorstep? Better idea: Hike 4 miles up into the chasm to sleep among the expansive Teton vistas and kaleidoscopic wildflowers of the upper canyon, then take the plunge into Phelps Lake on the way back.

Swim season July to September **Trailhead** Death Canyon (43.6558, -110.7811) **Regs** \$35 entry fee; permit required for backpacking (\$35 walk-in, \$45 advance reservations; recreation.gov) **Contact** nps.gov/grte

No. 42

SCORE LAKE MICHIGAN'S BEST CAMPSITE.
Newport State Park, WI

THE DOOR PENINSULA JUTS OUT into Lake Michigan like Wisconsin's extended pinkie finger, and Newport State Park clings to its eastern knuckle. Campsite 16 sits on the park's sandy northern beach, leaving nothing between you and the Michigan border but miles of lapping waves. Better yet? The submerged shoals here keep the water shallow (only knee-deep well into the lake) and relatively warm. Claim your beachfront property with a 3-mile hike on the Europe Bay Trail.

Swim season July to September **Trailhead** Parking Lot 3/Europe Bay (45.2380, -86.9878) **Regs** Permit required for backpacking (\$20/night; reservations required; wisconsin.goingtocamp.com) **Contact** bit.do/newport-state-park

No. 43

SLIDE DOWN TATE CREEK.
Wild Rogue Wilderness, OR

WATERPARK DESIGNERS wish their twisty plastic chutes packed the splashy fun Mother Nature pulled off with this 15-foot wilderness waterslide. Deep in the lush canyons surrounding Oregon's Rogue River, Tate Creek pours off a moss-slicked rock slab into a fairy-tale grotto. Scramble up the cliff face, let 'er rip, and plunge into the pearly-blue pool at the base. Repeat.

Tate Creek Slide is the cherry on top of a classic overnight hike in the Wild Rogue Wilderness. Start in the large meadow at the Big Bend trailhead, then trace the Rogue 9 miles upriver through oak savannas and Douglas fir forest (watch for poison oak). Grab one of the sandy, beachfront campsites at the mouth of Tate Creek (some have pit toilets), then scramble .3 mile upstream to the waterslide.

Swim season May to September **Trailhead** Big Bend (42.6390, -124.0555) **Regs** None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/rogue-siskiyou

Summer + SUN
By Heather Balogh Rochfort

I SHIELD MY EYES from the sun's warm rays and nestle deeper into my down-filled nest. I'm camped on the banks of Alaska's Alatna River, suffering from major chronological disorientation as the midnight sun arcs in the sky. North of the Arctic Circle, summertime sunshine transcends the horizon.

But it is bedtime, and our quintet just finished a high-mileage packrafting day through Gates of the Arctic National Park. Turns out, you cover a lot of miles with endless daylight. Now, I'm pooped.

As I bask in the sun's warmth, the rays lull me into a coma—or a siesta. As yesterday, a long day of paddling has given way to an even longer “night.” My hiking partners share paddling stories from the day—*did anyone else see the white wolf today?!—*and I drift in and out of consciousness. The evening progresses, and we prattle on, drunk on sunshine and whiskey. Daylight perseveres. Just like us, it is oblivious of the hour.





Tell a good ghost story.

Spin an unforgettable yarn to keep long summer nights alive.

1. **Wait for full dark** and the last cracking embers.
2. **Make yourself the main character**, and be reluctant to share.
3. **Let the forest do the spooking.**

Wind creaking in the trees? *Perfect.* Did a twig just snap over there? *What was that?!*

4. **End at the part where the axe murderer gets away and is still on the loose**—last seen at the trailhead 4 miles away. —Z.G.

No. 45

GO UNDER AT DEVIL'S BATHTUB.

Jefferson National Forest, VA

GOOD: SOAKING YOUR FEET in a goosebumpy-cold mountain stream on a sticky Southern day. Better: Achieving full immersion at The Swimming Hole, an 8-foot-deep pond. Best: Making it a twofer with another dip in the Devil's Bathtub, a waterfall-fed swimming hole nestled in phyllo dough-like stone just west of The Swimming Hole. A few minutes in either one is all it takes to go comfortably numb.

Work up a proper sweat en route on the Devil's Fork Trail, a jade tunnel of a hike that burrows through a dense, hemlock-rhododendron holler. Rock-hop across the Devil's Fork stream at least a dozen times before reaching The Swimming Hole at mile 1.7 and Devil's Bathtub at mile 1.8. Make a night of it: Continue along the Devil's Fork loop (6.9 miles total), a route linking Corder and Finney Hollows, and scout a campsite near the junction with Straight Fork Ridge Trail.

Swim season May to October **Trailhead** Devil's Fork (36.8188, -82.6284) **Regs** None
Contact www.fs.usda.gov/gwj



No. 46

FIND THIRTEEN FALLS.

Pemigewasset Wilderness, NH

THIS DEEP-WOODS SANCTUARY along Franconia Brook technically holds five swimmable waterfalls, not 13—but the chain of burbling drops, plus a 15-foot horse-tail, won't leave you wanting. Link the Lincoln Woods and Franconia Brook Trails for an easygoing, 16-mile out-and-back, camping at the Appalachian Mountain Club's 13 Falls Tentsite, a short stroll from the riverbanks and stone soaking pools.

Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Lincoln Woods (44.0639, -71.5879)
Regs \$10/person per night caretaker's fee for camping (first-come, first-serve sites) **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/whitemountain

No. 47
**VISIT AN
OASIS IN THE
DESERT.**
*Dominguez Canyon
Wilderness, CO*

AS IT TURNS OUT, you needn't leave Colorado to find a desert wilderness chock-full of redrock cliffs, cacti, bighorn sheep, and petroglyphs. But the splashing pool at the base of the canyon's 30-foot waterfall (unofficially called Dominguez Falls or The Waterfall) still comes as the best kind of surprise. To reach the lacy plume, follow the Gunnison River to the mouth of Big Dominguez Canyon, passing a set of shallow wading pools with their own waterfall just beyond the old dam at mile 1.5. At the Y-junction, head west, continuing deeper into Big Dominguez to find the cascade around mile 3. Make it an overnight by hiking another 2 miles along the creek (the lower canyon is closed to camping).

Swim season August and September **Trailhead** Bridgeport (38.8494, -108.3705) **Regs** None **Contact** bit.do/dominguez-wild

Dominguez Falls

No. 48

**DIVE INTO
SOOKE POTHOLE.**
Sooke Potholes Provincial Park, BC

THANK THE LAST ice age for this idyllic 2-mile stretch along British Columbia's Sooke River. Passing glaciers chiseled a series of vertical escarpments along the waterway and deposited erratic boulders, which the river used like a mortar and pestle to carve out deep underwater pockets. The result: a chain of pools perfect for clifftop jumps, plus plenty of low-key splashing spots, gushing waterfalls, and sunbaked mid-river lounging rocks.

Get the most out of your dip by making it the topper of the 9-mile (round-trip) overnight to Shields Lake in nearby Sooke Mountain Provincial Park. Track through a coastal rainforest thick with moss and ferns and home to black bears, wolves, and elk on the Harrison Trail. Camp on the lake's east side, once you cross the border from Sea to Sea Regional Park.

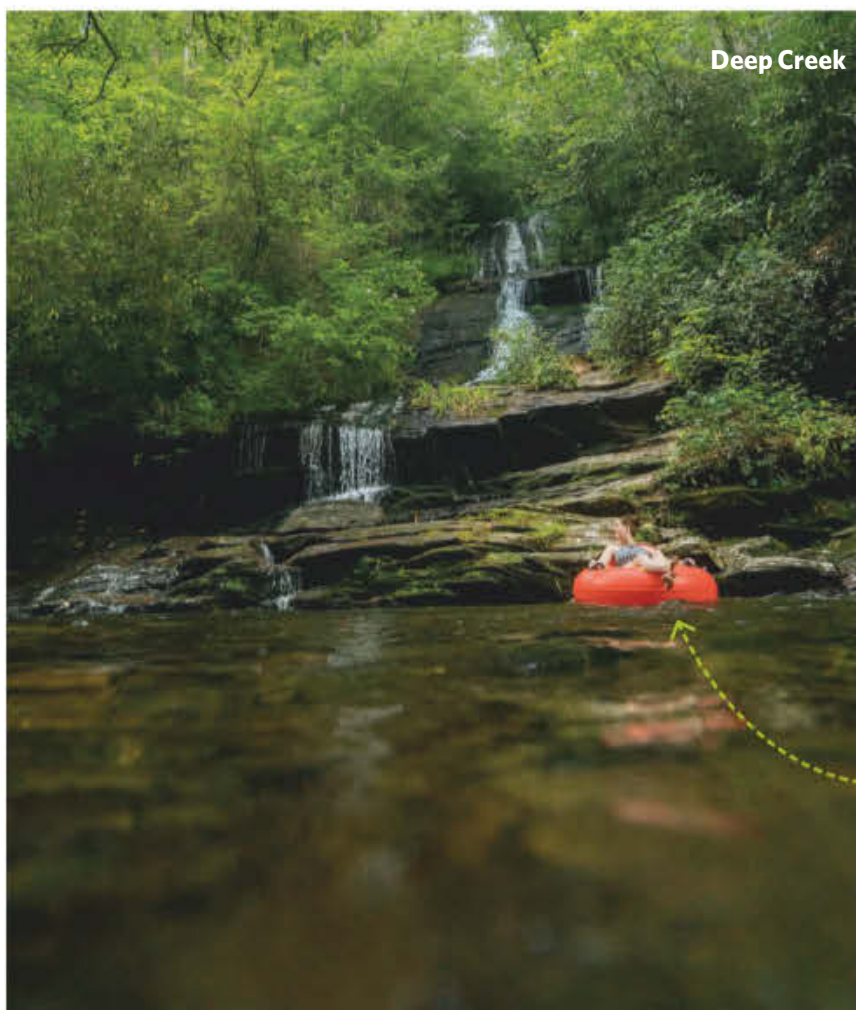
Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Sooke Potholes Provincial Park (48.4401, -123.7170) **Regs** None **Contact** env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks

No. 49

TUBE DEEP CREEK.
Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC/TN

LET'S GET THIS out of the way: Yes, tubing Deep Creek is totally something the Dollywood crowd would do. Just this once, join them. Cruising down the rhododendron-fringed stream punctuated with weepy waterfalls is *that* much fun. Shoulder a tube and trace the water a mile to the farthest put-in, where Indian and Deep Creeks meet. The rapids on the shorter upper section get rowdy in high water, but then the creek chills out into a lazy river-style float. Ready to ditch the crowds? Hike 2.5 miles upstream to backcountry site 60 for a lonely night under the trees.

Swim season June to September **Trailhead** Deep Creek (35.4647, -83.4337) **Regs** Permit required for backpacking (\$4/person per night; reservation required) **Contact** nps.gov/grsm



Deep Creek

NO. 50
**LET
NATURE
DO THE
WORK.**



Ultralight Backpacking Course

Learn all about ultralight backpacking in BACKPACKER's online workshop with record-setting thru-hiker Jennifer Pharr Davis. You'll get expert tips and insight into the lightweight mindset and ultralight methods, from gear to bring to mistakes to avoid. Enroll now and learn how to pack lighter—so you can go farther, faster.

Get started at backpacker.com/masterultralight

Get **\$25 OFF** with code **BPMAG**

BACKPACKER
GET OUT MORE

kitchen kit

Limited Edition
Collaboration

Hand-selected
Expert-tested

CAIRN[®]
x
BACKPACKER



ULTRALIGHT

Low on ounces,
high on flavor



DELUXE

Table for two
with a view

EXPLORE KITS AT:

[BACKPACKER.COM/KITCHENKIT](https://backpacker.com/kitchenkit)

*fuel not included



SAWYER

humangear

PackTowl

HEATHER'S CHOICE

Meals for Adventuring

Epitaph in the Sky

An obscure peak in the High Sierra preserves the legacy of a beloved ranger and beckons more to its granite summit.

BY ERIC BLEHM



Mt. Morgenson, though nearly 14,000 feet tall, is unnamed on maps.

PHOTO BY JOHN DITTLI

W

WE WERE ON A CROSS-COUNTRY ROUTE, ascending a gentle gully, when Rick Sanger—or “Ranger Rick,” as he was known for nearly two decades in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks—bolted past me in a full sprint. His elbows were pumping, his boots were kicking up gravel, and the hiking pole in his right hand was pointed skyward, gripped in the manner that one might wield a sword while charging an enemy—or hightailing it away from one.

Startled, I glanced over my shoulder to see if I should be running too. But there was nothing behind us with claws or fangs, only granite and a few old burled snags, their haunting but harmless limbs reaching up into the lingering edge of an afternoon thunderstorm.

I turned to face uphill again and watched as Rick, in full stride, charged up the rock-strewn gully. He moved not with the clumsy, bouncing gait you’d expect from a man running uphill with a 30-pound backpack, but rather with the flowing rhythm and grace of something freakish, like a genetic blend of mountain goat and ninja.

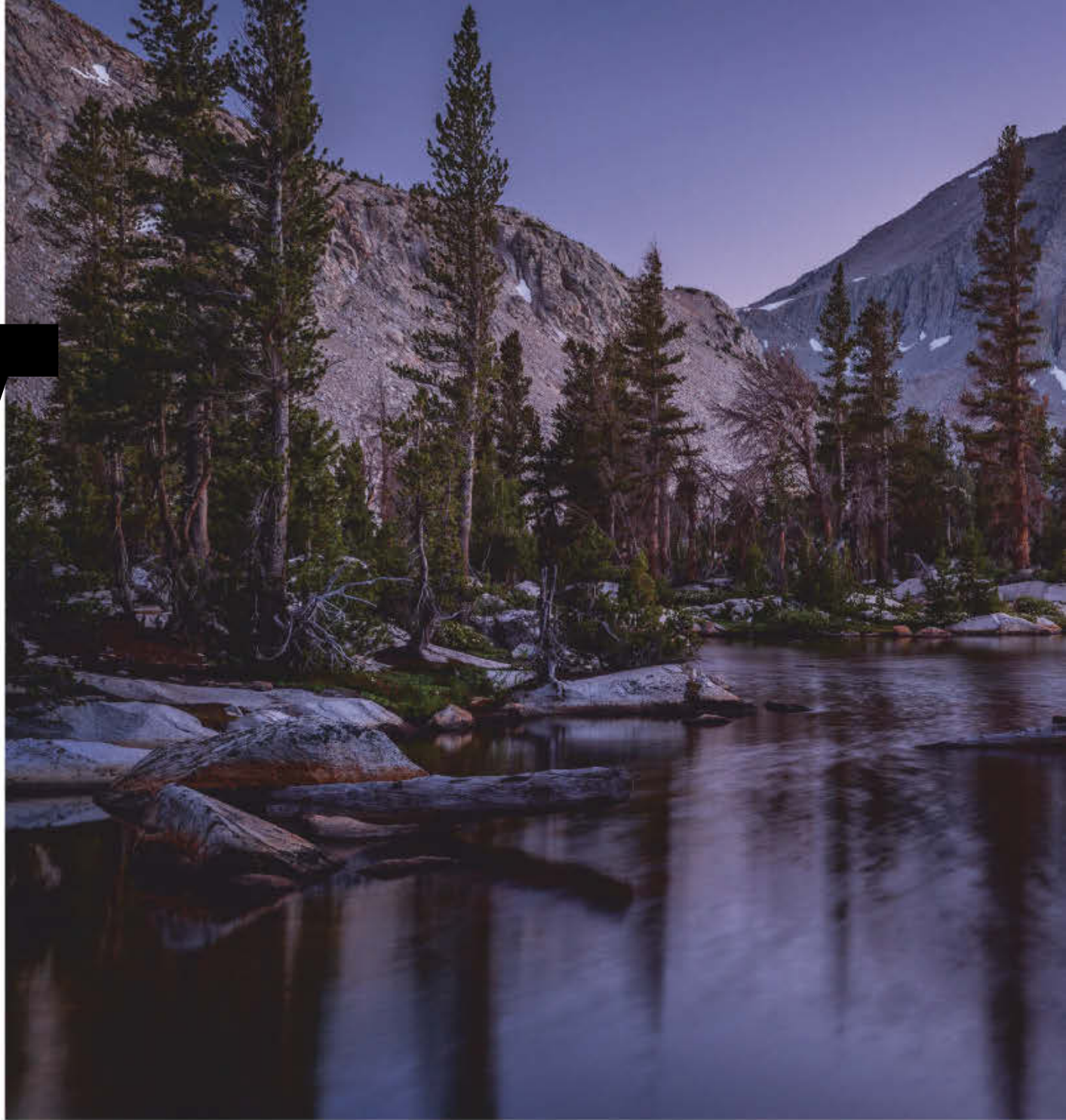
I scanned the landscape ahead, searching for whatever had precipitated this bizarre behavior, and a metallic glint caught my eye. It was 30 or 40 yards ahead of Rick, up near the top of the slope and drifting toward him across a ridge that converged with the gully we were climbing. It was to that intersection he ran, leaped, and, with a veritable battle cry, brought his hiking pole down upon a bouquet of balloons riding the air currents. He pinned the shiny mylar to the gravelly soil, his chest heaving as he caught his breath.

I reached him just in time for the coup de grâce, a fatal downward stab with his hiking

pole, both hands on the “hilt” just for effect. “That was for Randy,” he said with a grin as he picked up the deflated mass and shoved it in the side pocket of his pack.

Randy Morgenson had been not only a legendary wilderness ranger in these mountains, but a personal friend and mentor to Rick. Their mutual disdain for garbage—dubbed “backpacker detritus” by Morgenson—came from hauling gunny-sacks full of it out of the backcountry. Balloons were, and still remain, a sore point with rangers. The flying garbage ends up anywhere and everywhere, usually crumpled on the windward slopes of the higher peaks or tangled among the branches of whatever cedar, pine, or willow stands in its flight path when the helium runs out. The metallic versions, like this one, flash relentlessly like signal mirrors. “They intrude upon the most sacred places with their banal messages,” Rick said. “To catch one in the act and hack it down is a dream come true.”

When the adrenaline subsided, and we stopped laughing, I felt a presence, a silent observer to our antics. Rick’s efforts had brought us into view of our trip’s objective—Mt. Morgenson.



THE 13,920-FOOT, SOUTHERN SIERRA peak is unofficially named after the esteemed Sequoia and Kings Canyon backcountry ranger who had, over the course of more than 30 years of service, become as famous for the volume of garbage he lugged out of the mountains as he was for his wilderness stewardship, gentle kindness, and an uncanny ability to find lost or missing hikers and climbers. Which explains why the ranger community was shocked when, in July of 1996, Randy Morgenson himself went missing.

That summer, Rick was a just a second-year backcountry ranger and considered Randy the wisest man in these mountains. When Randy failed to check in by radio for several days, Rick hiked through the night to his mentor’s duty station at Bench Lake (above) and discovered a note confirming he was overdue from a cross-country patrol. It spurred one of the most intense and emotionally draining search-and-rescue operations in National Park Service history, in large part because the rangers were searching for one of their own. Thirteen days later, the official search, which included helicopters, dog teams, and dozens upon dozens of volunteers, was called off. Not a

Cast Your Vote for Trail by Design

BACKPACKER and Merrell teamed up with eight artists to inspire others by sharing what the trail means to them, through their own unique vision and design.

The winning artist will win a cash prize and their design will be printed on a t-shirt benefiting The Conservation Alliance.

Additionally, Merrell will donate \$7,500 to an outdoor non-profit of the artist's choice.



Latasha Dunston



Alyse Dietel



Nikki Frumkin



Dave Bonan



Christopher Warren



Alex Rubio



Nika Meyers



Heidi Nisbett

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE DAILY AT
backpacker.com/trailbydesign
until August 30th.



single trace of Randy had been found, not even a footprint.

I followed the disappearance from day one, having heard about it from Randy's former boss, retired ranger Alden Nash, who was a family friend of mine. He told me that Randy had grown up in Yosemite National Park, carried around Ansel Adams's tripod as a boy, and spent more time in the Sierra than John Muir himself. But he was also human and had his flaws, his personal demons. The summer he disappeared, his wife had served him with divorce papers. And those closest to him said he had seemed depressed. It all fueled speculation about his fate. Perhaps he went missing on purpose—walked out of the wilderness to start a new life elsewhere. Or maybe he'd ended the one he had in some wild and remote corner of his beloved Sierra. He'd also had run-ins with a climber and a horsepacker the previous year, so foul play wasn't off the table, either.

In the years that followed the search, Alden and I made repeated trips to the mountains in search of clues to solve the mystery of Randy's disappearance. I never knew Randy, but I was obsessed with his story. Could a man with his experience really just vanish?

Randy Morgenson was stationed at Bench Lake before he disappeared. Arrow Peak rises in the background.

It wasn't until the summer of 2001, five years after he disappeared, that Randy's remains were finally discovered. A 19-year-old member of a California Conservation Corps trail-building crew ventured off-trail and found his body at the base of a waterfall. (After comparing records and GPS coordinates from search teams, I realized this ravine had been inadvertently skipped by just a few hundred yards.) The following summer, Alden and I retraced Randy's presumed final cross-country patrol from his last-known whereabouts at Bench Lake to where his remains were found in the gorge above Window Peak Lake. On the route, Alden and I detoured slightly and scrambled up Arrow Peak—as we had many peaks over the years—to see if Randy had signed the summit register.

He had not, but as we were sitting there atop the peak, Alden pointed toward a hazy and distant grouping of mountains to the southeast. "There's a Fourteener over there

Trail by Design Presents: Dave Bonan

“I see art as a way to communicate the esoteric, and often complex, science to the public in a simple way.



I am pursuing a Ph.D. where I study the physical processes governing the climate system and try to conduct research that answers questions about climate change: How fast will the Earth warm? What regions will experience the largest changes? There is a disconnect between scientists and the public.

By transforming each intricate landscape into a cartoon, the illustrations I create show how the natural world can generally be distilled into a simple picture. I hope my art better communicates the intrinsic beauty of the natural world and the value of climate research.”

MERRELL
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR DAVE:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@david_bonan | davebonan.com



near Mt. Whitney that's never been named,” he told me. “People are starting to call it Mt. Morgenson to honor Randy.”

“Do you know who named it?” I asked.

“I can't say,” he replied.

“As in you don't know?” I clarified, “or you can't say?”

“Yes,” he responded.

I suspected it had been rangers, so Alden's reticence didn't surprise me. Rangers protect their own, and naming a peak, even unofficially, might be construed as a rogue action by their bosses. Seasonal backcountry rangers have no long-term security—they're hired and fired annually—so they can be anxious about jeopardizing their coveted jobs. Better to keep quiet than risk losing their place in the wilderness.

THUS MY JOURNEY to climb Mt. Morgenson began as a riddle. Like Randy's disappearance, the peak's exact location (and who named it) was at first a mystery. “It's hard to find a mountain that's not there,” Alden told me as we speculated over a topo map that evening in camp, below Arrow Peak. Not long after that 2002 trip, I received an envelope in the mail that contained a topo map with an “X” marking the spot; the attached note clarified that the name Mt. Morgenson

was being unofficially suggested by Randy's fellow backcountry rangers and other park employees in his honor.

In *The Last Season*, the 2006 book I wrote about Randy and his disappearance, I described Mt. Morgenson as “... the first peak west of Mt. Russell and just north of Mt. Whitney, a high and wild granite monolith of [nearly] 14,000 feet that was somehow overlooked all these years. The name can't be found on a map—the U.S. Geological Survey and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks don't officially recognize the title. ‘You can't Google it,’ said one ranger [back in 2006], ‘but you can climb it.’ And really that's all that matters.”

Shortly after the book's publication—and a decade before my own attempt to climb the peak—a summit register bearing the name “Mount Randy Morgenson, 13,920” was hauled to the top by two park veterans. A peakbagger named Richard Piotrowski found the original register missing when he climbed Mt. Morgenson on September 20, 2008. He placed a temporary one that day, and made a herculean effort to return to the summit one week later with a weatherproof ammo can and the journal that remains on the summit today. Barely a handful of people, if any, sign it each year. Before these registers, the peak was referenced only by its height on USGS maps: “Peak 4245 m (13,920+ ft).”

Trail by Design Presents: Alyse Dietel

“Nature does not conform to humankind, but rather is bent to our will.”



Unfortunately, our will is not always in the best interest of nature and its creatures. I use my art to show that it could be the other way around. I hope to show that we are all connected in nature, and that the negative effect we have on our earth affects us just as negatively.

I hope to capture the wonder and awe of wild places and animals, and to instill a desire to conserve and protect them. This message is important because we are running out of time. We need to instill a sense of responsibility and action in those in power. Art is like a spark. It has this amazing ability to ignite raw emotions, evoke new understandings, and inspire change. Art is like a spark, and this message needs to spread like wildfire.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR ALYSE:

backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@amilliontinylines | amilliontinylines.com



Clockwise from top left: Laura and Rob Pilewski, John Dittli, the author, and Rick Sanger at Wallace Lake; the snow cave where Randy Morgenson's radio was found and it's speculated he fell through the ice; Morgenson at Tyndall Creek Ranger Station in 1988

Of course, nothing can prevent people from calling a peak whatever name they choose, and today you can find extensive references to Mt. Morgenson via internet searches, and even its location. But you won't find an easy route to the top. There is no straightforward trailhead at which to park your car, no defined way to the mountain's base, and no trail at all to the summit. To get there, you must choose one of several cross-country approaches that seasoned peakbaggers call a dayhike. Most mortals require an overnight, maybe two, for a round-trip, depending upon an eastern or western approach. For our trek in the summer of 2018—the first attempt at climbing Mt. Morgenson for both of us—Rick and I had decided on a long, meandering route that would take us through a little bit of everything Randy loved about the Sierra.

Starting at the sage-scented desert floor of the Owens Valley on a hot July day, our lives slowed down the second we hit the trail. “Half your pace, double your fun” was a piece of advice Rick used to post on trailhead billboards. It was a knowing and encouraging message from a man wired for his job. So when I'd first asked him if he'd guide me on an off-trail “ranger” route to Mt. Morgenson and he told me he was no longer rangers, I was shocked. I'd gotten to know Rick during

the research I did for my book, and I'd taken it for granted that he'd be a ranger forever—or at least until his body gave out.

While we ambled up the trail, Rick shared with me the reasons he had not returned to his long-held position as a backcountry ranger the past two summers. He openly described the depression he suffered while coming to terms with his life changes—first and foremost, a baby girl. He and his wife had spent a magical summer in the backcountry with their new daughter Charlotte at Charlotte Lake (no coincidence). But the experience proved logistically difficult, fundamentally at odds with the needs of his family, and financially unsustainable.

What to do? Starting a new career in his mid-50s, after two decades in the mountains, was a challenge. His struggles, like Morgenson's, offered a glimpse into a hidden side of rangers: What happens when the glory days end? Leaving the ranger ranks and saying goodbye to full summers in the Sierra was more than just losing a job—it was losing a yearly source of emotional, spiritual, and physical rejuvenation. At a time when Rick knew he should be celebrating the life he and his wife had brought into this world, he felt like he was dying inside. He told me that he was “lost like a tenderfoot” out in the so-called “real world.” He recognized that he was now following *too* closely in his mentor's footsteps. He said that, like Randy, he had been gazing at the scenery without looking where he was going and suddenly all was dark and disorienting. He had reached out to other ex-rangers for support, one

Trail by Design Presents: Latasha Dunston

“We have an innate connection to the natural world that we cannot explain. Green spaces and bright colors of wildflowers are what fuel my passion for painting.



I hope to inspire people to slow down and really take in the landscape, notice the little details and movements around you. I also make it a point to photograph all my work while I am on the trail and each photo shows my hand.

My brown, skin kissed hand.

That is me, a black cis woman, taking up the space I deserve in the world and when I share my art people see my skin and they know that the outdoors is for everyone.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR LATASHA:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@jitterbug_art | jitterbugart.com



of whom recommended, “just don’t think about the backcountry” and “watch a lot of kitten videos.”

Hearing this, and more, I wondered if inviting Rick on this trip had been such a good idea after all. Was all of this beauty just an ugly reminder? Had the Range of Light gone dark for him? I hoped this trip would help him discover a route, not only to Mt. Morgenson, but for a way forward in life.

The following morning and 6,000 vertical feet later, we topped Sheppard Pass, and were welcomed to the high country with

a squall. “Smell that?” Rick said, inhaling deeply, as we pulled ponchos from our packs. “Rain on granite, nothing like it.” And he was off, hustling across the exposed plateau. Thunder growled. Lightning flashed. “We should spread out a couple hundred feet,” he yelled back to me. “If the lightning gets much closer, get up against a rock and sit on your sleeping pad with your knees pulled up to your chest.” He took a few more steps. “Hey, not to freak you out,” he continued, “but if I die up here, I’m good with that.” He inhaled deeply again, and I gave him a thumbs-up.



From top: Show time at an unnamed lake between Randy's last patrol and Mt. Morgenson; Rick Sanger and the author on the hike out

As a young ranger, Randy wrote about his relationship with the outdoors while on patrol, and now, as Rick led the way off-trail, the words Randy wrote in his 1973 McClure Meadow log came back to me: *All of your life, someone is pointing the way, directing you this way and that, determining for you which road is best traveled. Here is your chance to . . . be adventuresome. Don't forever seek the easiest way. Take the way you find. Don't demand trail signs and sturdy bridges. Don't demand we show you the mountains. Seek them and find them yourself. . . This is your birthright as an animal, most commonly denied you. Be free enough from intentions to find goodness wherever you are and in whatever is happening. Here for once in your life you . . . can now live by whim. . . Here's your one chance to get lost, fall in the creek, find a beautiful place.*

A place just like the ridge on which Rick and I stood gazing at Mt. Morgenson, Rick still catching his breath after his spirited charge to spear the balloons. Rising majestically over Wallace Lake, the craggy peak dominates the skyline, appearing taller than Whitney. That's when Laura Pilewski, the Tyndall Creek backcountry ranger, with 16 seasons as a wilderness ranger and 24 years as a National Park Service employee, came trotting up toward us from the other side. Her pants were soaked from the thighs down from crossing the outlet of the lake while

I hoped this trip would help him discover a route, not only to Mt. Morgenson, but for a way forward in life.

chasing after the same bunch of balloons.

"Rick Sanger, fancy seeing you here," she joked, giving him a hug.

"Those balloons didn't stand a chance," Rick said, as the three of us picked our way down the other side of the ridge to join Laura's husband, Rob, the Crabtree Meadow ranger, as well as eastern Sierra legend John Dittli, a former park ranger himself, who's spent nearly four decades exploring and photographing these mountains. On this trip, he was nearing the end of a journey he'd dubbed the Grand Traverse—he intended to travel the park from top to bottom, both the crests and the canyons.

John said this solo cross-country trek had been instigated by his 60th birthday, and that he couldn't decide if "GT" stood for "grand traverse," "geezer tour," or simply a "good time." It was a two-week, 100-plus-mile trip, and if he kept to his schedule he'd meet us on his eleventh day out: July 26. He had.

Rick had proposed that the five of us come together on the shores of Wallace Lake on this date so we'd be here during the Pilewskis' scheduled days off. It was something of a fluke that it all came together, for in addition to John's mileage, both Rob and Laura's "days off" had been filled with backcountry emergencies for five consecutive weeks, including one cardiac arrest, a climbing fatality, and numerous rescue requests. One "emergency," however, had proven to be two 20-something backpackers hiking a section of the John Muir Trail, who had become "trapped" at a creek they felt was too perilous to cross and activated their emergency locator beacon. Not knowing the nature of the emergency, Laura had hiked several miles carrying oxygen and a full trauma kit. With a deep breath, she explained to them what a legitimate emergency is and directed them to an easier crossing nearby. Such is the life of a backcountry ranger.

Our plan for the following day was to scramble up the summit of Mt. Morgenson to pay homage to Randy. The prospect of seeing the view from "his" peak was something I'd anticipated for years, and it reminded me of something Alden Nash once told me. When you reach a summit for the first time and spin that slow 360 degrees, he

Trail by Design Presents: Nikki Frumkin

“ My favorite trails are the ones that take me past mountain ridges, summits, and alpine lakes.



The sweeping views make me feel so small, yet incredibly strong and connected to the earth. I love being in these wild places as alpenglow turns the landscape pink, illuminating my favorite mountains and calling me further into the wild.

These magical places exist deep in the backcountry, in local state parks, or maybe even in a nearby park at sunset. The more connections we make to the places we care about and to each other, the more likely we are to act to take care of them. I hope my art can remind people of what they know about themselves and how they belong to the wild. In this way, we can work together to protect the places we play in."

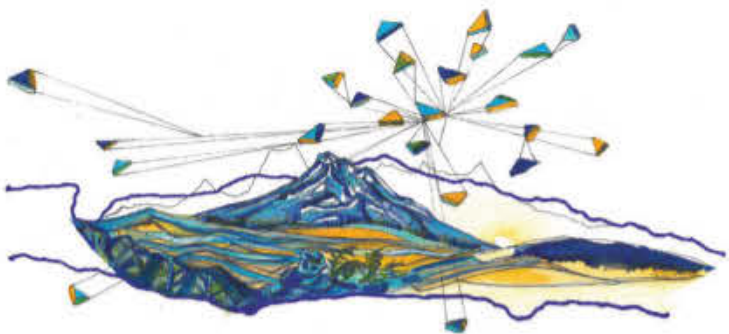
MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR NIKKI:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@drawntohighplaces | drawntohighplaces.com

Trail by Design Presents: Nika Meyers

“As someone who is following in the footsteps of visionaries, big dreamers, and countless volunteers who have used their strengths to celebrate our natural world and its wonders, I strive to bring my passions, experiences, and art into those conversations.



After over 9,000+ miles of hiking, I use art to share moments of physical and mental strength, raw emotions, wild silliness, and landscapes experienced with limitless curiosity.

The interconnectedness of this world inspires me to dream big and work to encourage people to stand up for our world, each other, and ourselves. I create art that I hope honors the importance of creating access and openness for all who wish to spend time in our outdoor spaces.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR NIKA:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign
[@earlybirdhikes](https://www.instagram.com/earlybirdhikes) | nikameyers.com



said, “you’re unwrapping the view—it’s not a reward for your efforts. It’s a gift.”

I’d never met John, Laura, or Rob, but by the time I’d pitched my tent and shared a batch of miso, it felt as if I was with long-lost relatives. We all harbored a deep connection to both Randy and these mountains. The Pilewskis had joined the search for Randy, and John had befriended him on his alpine travels. As the sun sank, we gathered on a huge granite slab a couple hundred feet from the lake’s shore, warmth radiating from the rock even while the temperature dropped. Peaks rose several thousand feet above us in all directions. Rob ceremoniously unwrapped two lovely trout he’d caught and smoked for the occasion, their orangey-pinkish flesh on par with the colors that had begun to paint the surrounding summits. Laura added a block of cheese, Rick some hearty crackers, and I unveiled mini bottles of spirits and began mixing powdered-electrolyte cocktails. John, whose bear cannister was nearing the trip-end dregs, searched for something to contribute but finally succumbed to our demands to “stop and eat.”

We raised a cup to Randy, then chatted well into the headlamp hours, rapt as John described his journey through the Window Peak drainage. He’d paused at the giant snow bridge that still spanned the creek in late July, the same type of bridge where many

speculate Randy met his end. Hundreds of others had journeyed to that beautiful spot over the years, scratched their heads, and wondered if Randy had fallen through the ice farther upstream. Had his body moved down to the falls during the spring runoff? Or perhaps he’d fallen through the ice bridge, right where his radio had been found, right where John had bent down, peered into the deep, cold, drafty ice cave, and paid his respects.

Or perhaps he hadn’t fallen at all. “The least I owe these mountains is a body,” Randy had said to a fellow ranger after one particularly dicey rescue mission during which he had been hit on the head by rock-fall. His helmet had likely saved his life, but he seemed ambivalent about it. When Randy went missing two years later, that quote haunted the rangers.

It was a somber moment of silence in our camp. All of us had visited that spot and contemplated Randy’s end. Randy, 58 at the time of his disappearance, had been struggling with ending his career, which

“The least I owe these mountains is a body,” Randy had said to a fellow ranger.

Trail by Design Presents: Heidi Nisbett

“In 2018 I thru hiked the Appalachian Trail. I carried a sketchbook and watercolors for the duration of my hike, earning me the trail name “Picasso.”



I find inspiration in the patterns of the natural world and am fascinated with the rolling nature of the Appalachian landscape.

It is my goal to showcase the beauty I find in nature and the importance of immersing one's self in it.

I want to inspire others to step outdoors, be it for a walk in the park or a long distance thru hike, in hopes of them finding the same fellowship in the wilderness that I did. It is my intent to spark a sense of adventure in the viewer, as well as reassure them that their goals are in reach.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR HEIDI:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@sketchingsummits | sketchingsummits.com

Ranger reunion on the summit of Mt. Morgenson
(from left: Rick Sanger, Laura and Rob Pilewski)

We picked our way through the talus and rubble, contouring as we climbed to a ridge that led to the summit. It was classic Sierra scrambling: fun, yet requiring constant attention to shifting rocks. As the lakes began to shrink into ponds and then puddles far below, I felt the excitement swelling in my head—or at least that was how I discounted the first wave of dizziness.

Another few hundred feet of elevation, and the rock beneath my feet swayed, causing me to reach out and steady myself on a waist-high chunk of granite. Testing my footing, I realized it had been that sensation you get at a red light, when the car next to you creeps forward and you slam on your brakes, only to realize you aren't moving.

A little more altitude and I was no longer thinking about the summit, but rather contemplating how I'd get down. We entered a chute that required a simple class 3 move and I literally hugged the granite. It was steep enough now that every time I looked up to spot the others, a rush of vertigo spun my vision. *What's wrong with you? This isn't Everest, it's easy scrambling. You've been wanting to do this for how many years? And now you're here at 13,000 feet—so close, just a few more pushes and you're there.*

I'd never turned away from a Sierra peak in my life. But when a single, white cotton-ball of a cloud drifted in from around the corner of Mt. Morgenson's upper shoulder and hung there, I started thinking of yesterday's afternoon squall. From blue sky to the first raindrops had been perhaps 15 minutes. I made my decision and called out, “Hey, Rob—would you think less of me if I just waited here while you guys push on? My head's not feeling right, and I don't want to slow you all down, especially if we get a storm.”

“Actually,” said Rob, “I'd think more of you. You're being really smart. And this is the perfect place for it.”

We made a plan, and Rob—who was in his 27th year as a wilderness ranger—watched as I made my way down toward a gravelly ledge where we would either meet up or I could better see the eastern slope if their descent ended up going that direction. Once I got there, Rob gave me a thumbs-up, and then climbed up and out of sight to catch up with the others.

Looking around for a place to recline and close my eyes, I smelled a distinctly sweet and delicate scent and found myself in a garden of strikingly blue polemonium, which had been Randy's favorite Sierra flower. I'd only happened upon the high-altitude gem a

for wilderness rangers is like ending a love story. Eventually, they all must stop—bodies give out, partners want company, 401(k)s need contributions. But then what? Will brief sojourns back into these wilds be enough? That's the question Rick wanted to answer on this trip.

Gordon Wallace, one of the park's earliest backcountry rangers, during the 1930s, had summed up the dilemma by warning future rangers, “Do not come and roam here unless you are willing to be enslaved by its charms. Its beauty and peace and harmony will entrance you. Once it has you in its power, it will never release you for the rest of your days.”

THE NEXT MORNING, we began our planned ascent, rambling up the gentle basin, finding grassy ramps that presented themselves like secret passages through a series of granite benches. The sky was clear, but we covered the half-mile approach briskly, fully aware that thunder and lightning were the afternoon trends. Once we reached Wales Lake, more than 2,000 feet below Mt. Morgenson, I was already at the summit in my mind, where I intended to pull out the square of folded paper in my pocket and read aloud a few lines I'd copied from Randy's logbooks.

Trail by Design Presents: Alexandra Rubio

“Each of my paintings represents a story. I work hard to evoke an emotion and to match a moment in time.



I try to stay true to my art by only creating things I want to create and that I have personally experienced. I want to capture the feeling of watching an eastern Sierra sunset after an unexpected scramble in the Buttermilks, or the feeling of sitting with friends at the base of El Cap during sunset.

My energetic (and almost chaotic) style stems from my need to explore more, to experience more, and to do more of the things that make me feel alive. I hope my pieces encourage others to do the same — that they encourage others to create and cherish their own stories of being in the outdoors.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR ALEX:

backpacker.com/trailbydesign

@alexandra.rubio.art | alexandrarubio.com



From top: The author takes in the calm after the storm at Wallace Lake basecamp; sky pilots bloom on Mt. Morgenson.

handful of times, in little more than withered clumps, because I tended to visit the high country in September and October, past the flower's prime. I had hoped I might see it on this trip, and recalled the story from Randy's childhood, when he'd climbed a Yosemite peak with his father, Dana, and first discovered *polemonium eximium*. Dana told Randy that the common name is sky pilot because it is found only on or near the tops of the highest peaks. “The name,” said Dana, “means ‘one who leads others to heaven.’” Randy reached to pluck a tiny bouquet for his mother, but his father had stopped him, explaining how the delicate flowers had fought hard to survive in such a harsh environment. “Wouldn't it be nice to leave these alone?” He explained in terms an 8-year-old might grasp: “If climbers before us had picked these flowers, we wouldn't now be enjoying their beauty.”

I sat down amidst the blooms, their presence somewhat mitigating the regret of not summiting, as the others continued upward. It took them 30 minutes to top out, the final push requiring some puzzle work between, up, and over chunks of rock. Rick pulled himself up last and found John standing on the tiniest perch, with thousands of feet of air beneath him.

One by one, they each stood on the summit and unwrapped that 360-degree gift that included a near-eye-level vista of Mt. Whitney to the south and Mt. Russell to the east. Strings of emerald and turquoise lakes, patches of green meadows, and vertical granite formations in every imaginable shade of rust and gray stretched out from the vantage point. Those who have stood atop Mt. Morgenson say the view is among the best in the entire Sierra, and Rick concurred,



thrilled at having made it to a place he'd spent months thinking about. “You're bleeding,” Laura pointed out a gash on Rick's shin, which he called a “rock kiss,” with a hint of fondness. They signed the register, and the four of them lifted their water bottles, toasting their comrade: “To Randy.”

SOME 800 VERTICAL FEET below, I remained disappointed, to be sure, but it's hard to feel too sorry for yourself when you're reclining in paradise.

No storm moved in, the clouds remained scattered, and in what seemed like no time at all, I heard faint voices on the wind. I could see that the others had descended around the corner and were in the drainage far below, so I made my way down to join them, still feeling funky enough to butt-slide the steeper rock.

I was relieved to be on flat ground and happy for my companions. It occurred to me how appropriate it was that only rangers, past and present, made it to the summit to honor their colleague.

But I was most happy for Rick because he

Trail by Design Presents: Christopher Warren

“I took a hike through Chestler Park in the Needles district of Canyonlands National Park.



The needles are probably one of the most complex landscapes on the planet, with their fractal nature providing endless exploration. And then smack dab in the middle of that complexity is a flat park, a blank canvas, surrounded by guardian hoodoos.

It gives you the space to truly reflect on the complex landscape surrounding you. It gives your mind a blank surface to imagine anything you want. The abrupt change in landscape made me want to experience it from above, like a desert raven. From there I started exploring topographic maps as a form of art, in 2D and 3D.

This image pays tribute to the hike that began this leg of my artistic journey.”

MERRELL.
BACKPACKER

VOTE FOR CHRISTOPHER:
backpacker.com/trailbydesign
[@beatnikprints](https://www.instagram.com/beatnikprints) | Beatnikprints.com

was still grieving, not for Randy, but for this place. He needed the summit more than any of us that day. He needed to know that he could be himself without being a ranger. Was that the lesson Randy was grappling with when he died?

We took it slow back to our tents, pausing at benches peppered with obsidian flakes, wrapping around Wales Lake, and skirting a mountain meadow. A few hours later, in camp, I was getting water when some dark, slender clouds appeared on the craggy skyline rimming our basin. The edge of the storm reached over the ridgeline like a climber's fingers groping for a hold. And then in an instant, it leapt over and was upon us. I was spellbound by how swiftly the glassy waters of the lake were whipped into an angry sea of whitecaps and by how completely Mts. Russell, Morgenson, and Whitney dissolved into the swirling darkness. After only five minutes, sheets of rain and hail drove the five of us into our tents. Thunder rumbled and when lightning flashed, illuminating the inside of the tent, I began to count. Seven Mississippis later: *boom!*

After 20 minutes and another four or five lightning strikes, I was lying atop my air mattress when I felt an odd sensation beneath me. Lightning flashed again. One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three ... *boom!* The ground shook and I turned my head in time to see my empty water bottle as it disappeared under the rain flap, drifting away. Then it struck me: I was floating. *Well*, I thought to myself, *this is embarrassing.*

I'd pitched my tent in a flat spot that seemed perfectly angled to drain away any afternoon showers, but I hadn't anticipated the Biblical proportions of this tempest. The door of my tent faced away from the others, and the storm was so loud and violent, there was no point calling out to see how they were faring. Sitting up, I pulled my knees to my chest and draped my sleeping bag around my neck like a boa as lightning flashed again.

The storm raged for more than an hour, then the pounding rain and hail suddenly stopped. It was replaced by a soft, shimmering sprinkle on the tent walls. Snow.

As lightning continued to touch down around us, I pulled out the sheet of paper I'd meant to read on the summit. In the comfort of my office a week earlier, I'd chosen excerpts from Randy's writings, and one was especially appropriate considering my sleeping pad was doubling as a flotation device. Randy had always felt the most content when nature was at its wildest. *I don't wish man in control of the universe*, he'd written in 1971 while atop Mt. Solomons. *I wish nature in control, and man playing only just a role as one of its inhabitants. I want*



Ranger Confidential

After nearly two decades as a backcountry ranger in the Sierra, Rick Sanger couldn't bear the thought of a summer without endless mountains, lakes, and stars. He wondered: Did he need wilderness more than he needed his family? Read his story about the hardest challenge rangers face at backpacker.com/rangerconfidential.

every blade of grass standing naturally, as it was when pushed through the soil with spring vigor. I want the stones and gravel left in the autumn as spring meltwater left them. Only these natural places, apart from my tracks, give me joy, exhilaration, understanding. What humanity I have has come from my relations with these mountains.

Then it was over.

I climbed out of the tent and looked around, awestruck. The basin was covered in white, the sky was clear and, unexpectedly, so was my head. It was a vision so stunning, I could feel it in my core.

The others joined me, bailing water from their tents as they emerged. More than a century's worth of Sierra wilderness experience between us, and we'd all been caught off guard by the sheer depth of water that flooded what had seemed to be a sufficiently elevated camp. Rick, who had pitched his tent directly on granite, fared the best and hooted aloud, "Whoooo! What a storm!" He was clearly in his element, and it no longer seemed like being in the mountains reminded him that he soon wouldn't be. Lowering his voice, he said to me, "You know what? I think I'm going to be OK."

While John watched the water drain away from his tent, my gaze was drawn toward Mt. Morgenson. It was shining with a soft, pink alpenglow that ignited into a fiery red as I watched. I sighed, maybe more loudly than intended, and realized John was there beside me. He gave me a pat on the back.

Earlier, I'd asked the others how the top had been, and they had kindly avoided gushing over the view. John summed it up with a hand on my shoulder and a bit of wisdom every ranger, and every hiker, should learn to live by. "It's pretty special, but it's not going anywhere," he said. "Another time." 🏃

Eric Blehm is the author of *The Last Season*, which tells the full story of Randy Morgenson's life and disappearance, and which won a National Outdoor Book Award. An excerpt appeared in the 2006 May and June issues of **BACKPACKER** (read it here: backpacker.com/thelastseason).

TURBULENCE AND PEACE.

IN SOME STRANGE HARMONY.





almost heaven[®]

How to explain the feeling of calm that can coexist with the churn of a raging river? You are tossed and turned, yet somehow unshaken. It's not some cosmic irony. It's one of the alluring mysteries of West Virginia. Where rushing waters never fail to calm the soul.

WEST
VIRGINIA

WVtourism.com

LOST IN SPACE





**At these dark-sky destinations,
the stars are out of this world.**
By William M. Rochfort, Jr.

After squeezing through narrow chasms on the 2-mile Slot Canyon Trail in California's Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, set up camp on the rim as the stars fall before your eyes. (For timing info on summer's best meteor shower, see page 100.) Contact bit.do/anza-borrego

The Sangre de Cristo Range rises above the dunefield to the east.

Mooned

Stars shine brightest on a moonless night. But there's still plenty to see if your trip coincides with a lunar show.

1. Mare Imbrium

Forming the right eye of the Man in the Moon, this remnant basaltic lava field is 712 miles across (the distance from Chicago to New York). Apollo 15 touched down here in 1971.

2. Oceanus Procellarum

Nearly twice the size of the Gulf of Mexico, the lunar "ocean" Procellarum covers roughly 10.5 percent of the moon's total surface area.

3. Mons Huygens

Like the Kilimanjaro of the moon, Mons Huygens rises 18,000 feet and is the tallest peak on its surface.

4. Tycho

The moon's most recognizable pockmark was made by an asteroid 108 million years ago. The impact created a 15,000-foot-deep indent and scattered moon dust into 930-mile-long streaks.

5. Shroeter's Valley

The largest lunar canyon on this side of the moon is 100 miles long, up to 6 miles wide, and deeper than Yosemite Valley.



STAR DUNE

GREAT SAND DUNES
NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO

Welcome to the country's wildest sandbox. In unpopulated southern Colorado, rows of folded dunes trap pockets of perfect darkness and, on windless nights, absolute silence. You can't go wrong camping anywhere in this sandy wilderness, but if you need a target, aim for 775-foot Star Dune, the tallest one around. There are no trails out on the dunes, so head northwest from the Dunes Parking Lot, crossing the braided and shallow Medano Creek (widest with spring runoff in late May) en route to High Dune, the tallest pile of sand you can see from the creek. After a mile or so (hiking on sand is slow going; bank on travelling about half your normal speed), you'll crest it, unlocking a viewshed that includes the marbled Crestones, which cling to their snowy mantle until early summer. Star Dune lies another 1.5 miles west. Find a flat spot in a dune's lee to set up camp and bring all your water.

Trailhead Dunes Parking Lot **Season** Late spring and fall; the surface of the sand can reach 105°F in summer. **Permit** Required (free); obtain at the Visitor Center. **Contact** nps.gov/grsa

6. *Mare Tranquillitatis*

One of the moon's darkest spots, this basin, about the size of Texas, was the setting for "one giant leap for mankind" when Neil Armstrong bounded out of the Apollo 11 lunar module, 50 years ago.

7. *Copernicus Crater*

Thanks to bright white dust on a dark background, this 58-mile-wide, 2.4-mile deep indent is easily spotted with the naked eye. It's larger than the Great Salt Lake.

8. *"The headlights"*

This brighter the crater, the younger it is. These twin impact sites on the southeastern quadrant are 100 miles apart.



AMONG
THE STARS

It's a long way from
the pass down to
Stoney Indian Lake.

Stoney Indian Pass

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA

Climbing higher into the atmosphere does more than make you feel closer to the stars; where the air is thinner, the visual clarity improves, so the stars look closer. Set out for a three-night, 36.3-mile out-and-back, starting on the Belly River Trail and camping beside Glenn's Lake after 12.8 miles. Push up and over 6,908-foot Stoney Indian Pass before descending down to Stoney Indian Lakes campground at a high-elevation tarn. Pitch your tent, eat dinner, then pack your sleeping bag and pad and truck .6 mile (and 583 vertical feet) back up the pass to watch the sweeping, west-facing ridgeline above Stoney Indian Lake catch the day's last light. And then: the stars. Spend your last night at Glenn's or Crosley Lakes—it's hard to go wrong in Glacier's backcountry.

Trailhead Belly River **Season** Summer **Permit** \$40 + \$7/person per night; pay.gov **Contact** nps.gov/glac

MOON WALK

Eagle Mountain

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK, CALIFORNIA

With an absence of shade and a proliferation of granite that reflects the moonlight, you can leave your headlamp in your pack for the final climb of Eagle Mountain, the 5,350-foot highpoint of the Eagle Mountain Range. Start by daylight at the Cottonwood Visitor Center and head east, off-trail, toward the large draw

below the peak. Set up camp at the foot of the mountain (around mile 4), then fill a light pack for the last mile to the top, where dry desert air erases distortion between you and the heavens. Tip: Bring a GPS for backup navigation on the return trip from the summit; routefinding can be tricky, especially in the dark.

Trailhead Cottonwood Campground **Season** Spring and fall **Permit** Required (free); self-register at the trailhead kiosk. **Contact** nps.gov/jotr

GRAND SAWTOOTH LOOP

SAWTOOTH MOUNTAINS, IDAHO

Darkness pools in central Idaho, where large swaths of designated wilderness hold the line against development and light pollution. In 2018, a 1,416-square-mile tract in Sawtooth National Forest became the first place in the United States to be designated an International Dark Sky Reserve by the International Dark-Sky Association, highlighting a peerless chance to meld untouched land with unmarred skies. You can't fully experience the place on an overnight. Instead, brush up on off-trail navigation and go for full immersion on the 70-mile Grand Sawtooth Loop. Start at Grandjean Campground and hike clockwise, sleeping under star-dusted skies at Camp Lakes, Baron Creek, Lower Cramer Lake, Ardeth Lake, and Elk Lake.

Trailhead Grandjean Campground **Season** Summer **Permit** Required (free); self-register at the kiosk at Grandjean Campground. **Contact** bit.do/SawtoothNRA

Little Redfish Lake,
near mile 25

Intergalactic

4

A century ago, scientists thought our galaxy—what we call the Milky Way—was the entire universe. Not true, but it is one of the biggest things you can see with the naked eye (it's 105,000 light years across). Get to know your local star system by identifying some notable waypoints—telescope not required.

1

1. Sagittarius

Use the “teapot” to find the center of the galaxy. The constellation skates along the southern horizon on summer nights, and its spout points to the goods.

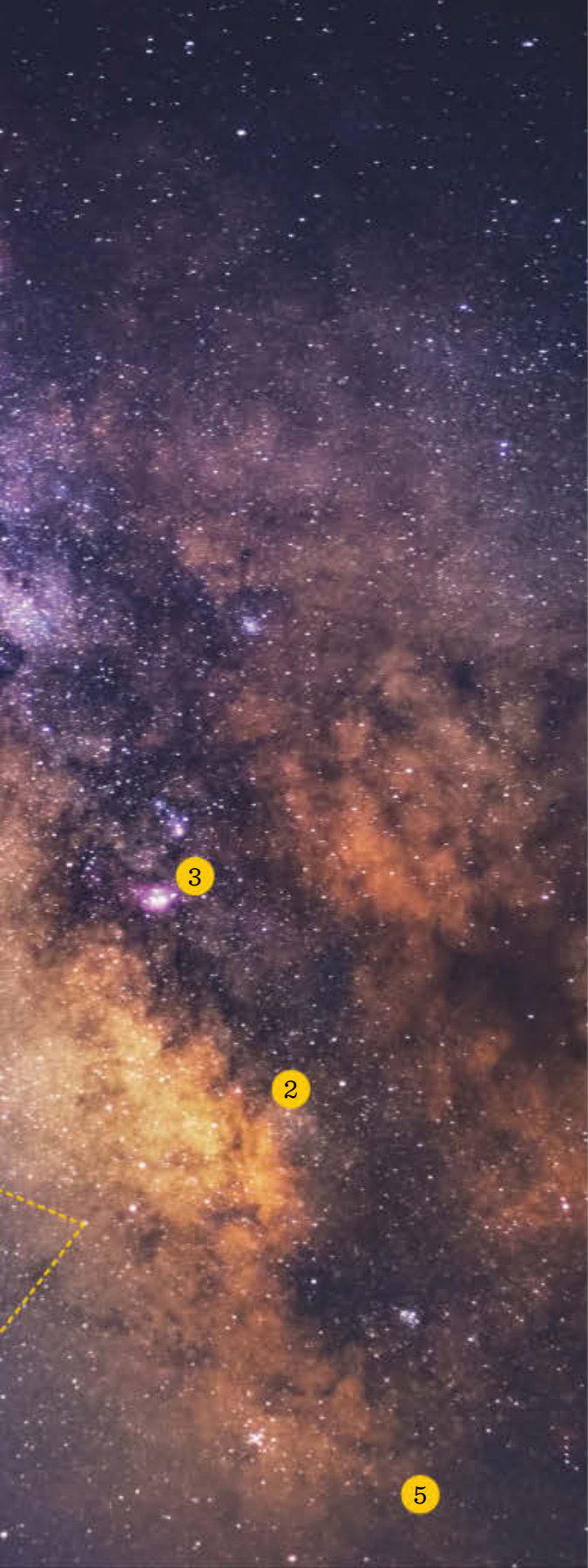
2. Core of the galaxy

On clear nights, the Milky Way's bright center is visible just above the southern horizon. That hazy white blob is actually a collection of 10 million stars, including red giants hundreds of times larger than our sun.

3. Lagoon Nebula

This vast gaseous cloud is the largest and brightest nebula in the Sagittarius constellation. Located

PHOTOS BY (FROM LEFT) ISTOCK.COM (2); WILLIAM M. ROCHFORD, JR.
TEXT BY DAVID GLEISNER (INTERGALACTIC AND EIGHT LAKES LOOP)



smack in the middle of the Milky Way, the nebula, which is about 5,000 light years away, appears as a faint grayish cloud in the summer sky.

4. *Eagle Nebula*

The Eagle Nebula is a 5.5 million-year-old furnace where new stars are forged. To the naked eye, the 450-star cluster has a slightly reddish light and sits between the constellations Scutum and Serpens.

5. *The Great Rift*

The Great Rift refers to a series of gas and dust clouds that block light from stars and give the Milky Way its distinctive shape.



Camp Lulu Key

TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE,
FLORIDA

Here's what tropical stargazing looks like: a private beach, bathtub-warm water, wildlife galore, the soothing sound of gentle surf, and soft sand on which to lie on your back and watch the stars spread out overhead.

To set up in this slice of paradise, start paddling from the Everglades Gulf Coast Visitor Center in Chokoloskee Bay, avoiding the boat lanes to Indian Key and opting instead to follow the west end of the bay for 9 miles out to the key. Strong navigation skills are a must, as it's easy to make a wrong turn among the area's mangrove islands. Keep an eye out for dolphins and manatees beneath the surface and more than 200 species of birds above. On landing at Camp Lulu, pitch your tent (anywhere; first come, first serve; BYO water) on the windward side to keep the bugs at bay—if that happens to be the south side, you can set up your tent perfectly to watch sunrise, starshine, and sunset from your door.

Trailhead Gulf Coast Visitor Center
Season October to April **Permit** None
Contact www.fws.gov/refuge/ten_thousand_islands/

INFINITY SKY

Eight Lakes Loop

BIG ISLAND LAKE
WILDERNESS, MICHIGAN

With the heavens above and reflected below, pushing onto a still lake at near perfect darkness feels like floating through space. Begin a two-night, 12-mile trip across eight lakes by portaging your gear .2 mile to the put-in at Big Island Lake (actually home to three islands), where birch and maple fringe the shore. Then link Mid, Coattail, and McInnes Lakes (via short portages) to a small, evergreen-enclosed campsite on the southern shore. Once the sun goes down on a calm evening, paddle out onto McInnes to get your spacewalk reflected off the lake's mirrorlike waters. On day two, paddle and portage to Klondike Lake to check out pitcher plants and bladderwort in the bogs, then continue to a campsite on the southwest shore. As daylight and energy levels allow, take the .3-mile portage over to 24-acre Vance Lake, then head to Byers Lake via Twilight Lake, where open-water vistas replace the forest-fringed views you've been seeing on the pocket-size lakes so far. Return to your camp on Klondike Lake. Close the trip by way of Mid and Big Island Lakes.

Trailhead Big Island Lake
Season June to September
Permit None **Contact** www.fs.usda.gov/hiawatha

Timing is Everything

Plan your summer hiking calendar around these celestial events.

JULY 2

New moon

Darkest skies = brightest stars.

JULY 9

Saturn at opposition

The Earth will be perfectly lined up between Saturn and the sun, making the sixth planet visible all night long. Look for a yellowish-white point of light in the constellation Sagittarius (see page 98 for help finding it). Viewing tip:

Unlike stars, planets don't twinkle.

JULY 16

Full moon

As the moon climbs through the sky, Saturn will be climbing with it, just to its left.

JULY 28

Delta Aquariids meteor shower

Comets provide the fuel for this shower, which peaks with 10 to 20 meteors per hour. Aim your sights toward the Aquarius

constellation, and be thankful the new moon is coming.

JULY 31

New moon

As promised.

AUGUST 1

Mercury rising

Up early? Look for bright-white Mercury above the eastern horizon.

AUGUST 12

Perseid meteor shower

The universe's most stunning annual

show peaks with about 50 meteors per hour in typical years, emanating from the Perseus constellation. Tip: This year's peak coincides with a full moon; view it earlier in the month.

AUGUST 15

Full moon

The month's full moon rises right after sunset.

AUGUST 30

New moon

The last of summer.

ON THE
SHORES OF
NIGHT

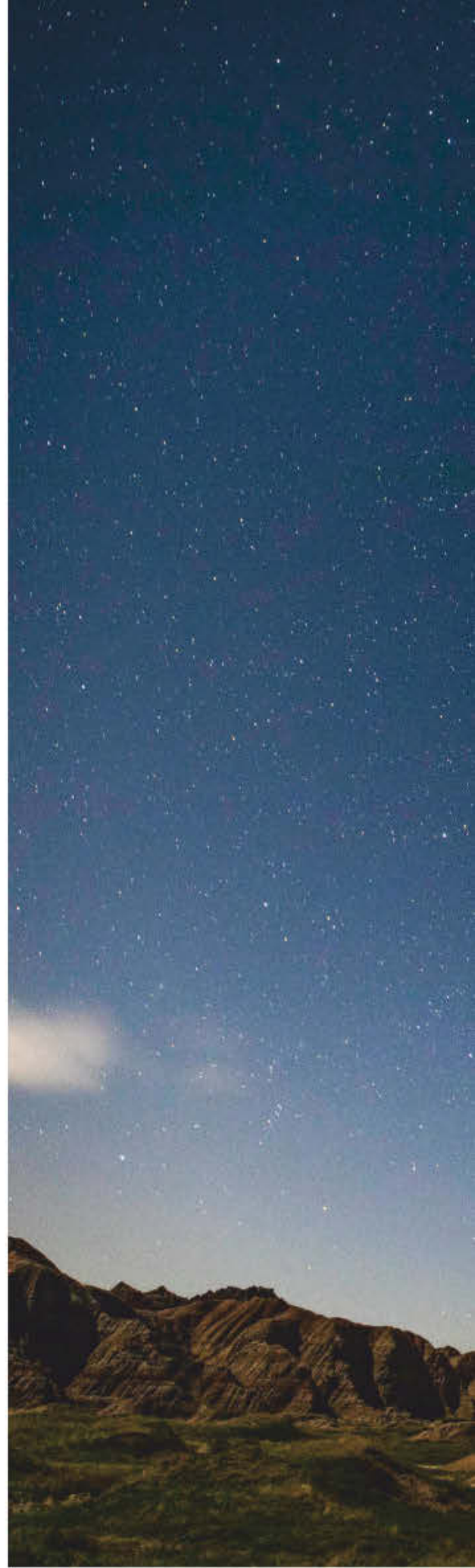
Duck Harbor, Isle au Haut

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK,
MAINE

Acadia has its annual Night Sky Festival (September 25-29), but if you want to ditch the party and plunge into the abyss yourself, you have to visit the lesser-visited sibling island in Maine's only national park. Hop the mailboat from the dock in Stonington en route to Isle au Haut, disembark at the Duck Harbor dock, and set up in one of the five primitive sites in the adjacent campground. It's a 2-mile hike south on the Western Head Trail to watch the sunset over mainland Maine from the southernmost tip of the island. Stay put as the stars blink on, and don't forget to look north—in the fall, if you get lucky, you might be able to see the aurora borealis from here.

Trailhead 37 Seabreeze Ave., Stonington, ME **Shuttle** \$40/round-trip; islehautferryservice.com **Season** May to October **Permit** Required (\$20/night); recreation.gov. **Contact** nps.gov/acad

The sun settles into
the mainland.



UNLOCK THE NIGHT
BACKPACKER Basecamp members get beta for three more starry-night destinations. For these extras and more exclusive benefits, join up at backpacker.com/basecamp.

PHOTO BY (LEFT) JERRY MONKMAN / CAVAN IMAGES;
JESSE ALBANESE. TEXT BY CASEY LYONS (OLYMPIC)

CELESTIAL
SOLITUDE

THE WALL

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH DAKOTA

The Badlands North Unit's austere terrain has edge-to-edge skies, wandering bison, and nary a trail. When the sun goes down, its dispersed camping and lack of visitors makes for a private star show (or join the group at the park's annual Astronomy Festival, July 5-7). Pack all your water and head toward The Wall, where a rampart of spires and pinnacles add silhouettes to your

stargazing. Start by driving west along the Sage Creek Rim Road from the Pinnacles entrance, and when you see a portion of The Wall you like (it's visible from the road), park and head in. Camping rules are simple: Trek at least half a mile and make sure no one can see you from the road, preserving that sense of awesome isolation.

Trailhead Sage Creek Rim Road **Season** Spring and fall **Permit** None required, but you can self-register at Sage Creek Basin Overlook. **Contact** nps.gov/badl

Geologic time and celestial
time collide at The Wall.

STARRY SOAK

Olympic Hot Springs

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK, WASHINGTON

Deep in the park and walled off from Port Angeles by rain-soaked forest and 5,000-foot-tall Happy Lake Ridge, the smattering of hot springs in this backcountry hideaway offers one of the darkest soaks in the country. Earn it on a 28.7-mile out-and-back that crests Appleton Pass, where the snowy domes of the Olympic Range dent the southeastern horizon, and home to your first night's camp. Next day, think of the hot springs. Your legs will be

pinning for them by the time you descend 2,600 feet over 4 miles to the North Fork Boulder Creek. From here, it's 1.7 miles to Boulder Creek Campground. Throw down and hike .1 mile to cross Boulder Creek, then ascend through the conifers for .2 mile to the natural, rock-rimmed springs. The lower pools are more lukewarm (80°F), while the higher ones get as hot as 118°F. Darkness comes quick in a forest this deep; enjoy the show.

Trailhead Sol Duc **Season** Summer **Permit** Required (\$6 + \$8/person per night); obtain at the Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles or recreation.gov. **Contact** nps.gov/olym

JULY 24-28, 2019

FLOYD, VIRGINIA

FLOYD FEST 19

VOYAGE HOME

THE STRING CHEESE INCIDENT

BRANDI
CARLILE

PHIL LESH &
THE TERRAPIN FAMILY BAND

KACEY
MUSGRAVES

TYLER
CHILDERS

LUKAS NELSON
& PROMISE OF THE REAL

MARGO
PRICE

LEFTOVER
SALMON

FANTASTIC
NEGRITO

HOT TUNA
(ELECTRIC & ACOUSTIC)

KELLER WILLIAMS'
GRATEFUL GRASS FEAT. LOVE CANON

KARL DENSON'S
TINY UNIVERSE

THE
MOTET

JADE BIRD • THE WAR AND TREATY • KYLE HOLLINGSWORTH BAND

AMERICAN AQUARIUM • DJ WILLIAMS' SHOTS FIRED • NEW ORLEANS
SUSPECTS • ACOUSTIC SYNDICATE • BUFFALO MOUNTAIN JAM
SONGS FROM THE ROAD BAND • THE SATURATORS • LILLIE MAE
KALETA & SUPER YAMBA BAND • BECCA MANCARI • TROUT STEAK
REVIVAL • JON STICKLEY TRIO • THE WOOKS • MOUNTAIN HEART
YARN • NORA JANE STRUTHERS • FRONT COUNTRY • PERT NEAR
SANDSTONE • OLD SALT UNION • THE YAWPERS • BELLA'S BARTOK
CIRCUS NO. 9 • HONEYSUCKLE • THE BROADCAST • ERIN & THE
WILDFIRE • THE VIRGINIA GENTLEMEN • SEAN MCCONNELL
PUMPHOUSE BLUES • ELISE DAVIS • L.A. EDWARDS • MAGNOLIA
BOULEVARD (2018 ON-THE-RISE WINNER) • TRAVERS BROTHERSHIP
(2018 ON-THE-RISE RUNNER UP) • BLUE MULE • CHUPACABRAS
DEAD RECKONING • DHARMA BOMBS • GOTE • JORDAN HARMAN
MORGAN WADE & THE STEPBROTHERS • MUSIC ROAD CO • MY RADIO
SOLACOUSTIX • THE FLOORBOARDS • THE JAM • THE WILDMANS
ACID CATS • ARKANSAUCE • DARK MOON HOLLOW • DOWNTOWN ABBY
& THE ECHOES • DRIFTWOOD GYPSY • MASON VIA & HOT TRAIL MIX
IF BIRDS COULD FLY • MARVELOUS FUNKSHUN • THE NORTHERNERS
THE VOLTS • TUATHA DEA • VINTAGE PISTOL • BECKI THE BALLOON
LADY • BLACKBERRY JAM • CANE MILL ROAD • ELLA & MARY
FLUIDITY PERFORMANCE TROUPE • GRAVITY CHECK JUGGLING
GYPSY GEOFF • HOOT AND HOLLER STORIES • HUNTER RHODES MAGIC
MAGICIAN OF LIFE • MAYA BURGESS & FRIENDS • MISS ELLIE'S STRING
BAND • MISS KITTY'S COSMONAUTS • COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL BAND
MUSIC LAB AT JEFFERSON CENTER • THE NEW RIVER JAM BAND
THE WORLD OF GOOD PUPPETS

FLOYDFEST.COM | MILEPOST 170.5,

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY, FLOYD, VA 24091

THANK YOU FOR
VOTING FLOYDFEST!

BEST
FESTIVAL

BEST PLACE
TO HEAR
MOUNTAIN
MUSIC

BEST
KID-FRIENDLY
OUTDOOR
DESTINATION



A TRIBE
CALLED FLOYDFEST

MUSIC
MAGIC

MOUNTAINS

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

CRAFT LIBATIONS

CAMPING

COMMUNITY

FAMILY FUN

100 ARTISTS

8 STAGES

5 DAYS



YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!

Experience begets skill—and blind spots, ruts, and inefficient routines. Just because you've taken to doing something one way doesn't mean it's the right way. From crossing a river to leading a group, there's a better way.

BY PETER MOORE



MY SON TYLER WENT ON HIS FIRST HIKE

at age 3, up Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania. I had to bribe him with chocolate at every step. He grew up, became a mechanical engineer and outing club jock, and now spouts all sorts of explanatory and corrective information, based on “science.” One day recently, while I was lacing my boots before a Father’s Day hike up Mt. Galbraith, in Golden, Colorado, he spoke words that froze me mid-knot: “Dad, you’re doing it wrong.” Then he knelt over his own trail shoes and made a beautiful bow that laid flat and resisted unraveling. He was right. After 40 years of thinking I knew how to tie my boots, I learned a better way.

It made me wonder what else I’d been doing wrong. That’s why I consulted a dozen-plus experts for tips and tricks on the right way to do nearly everything in the backcountry.

Knowing what I do now, I too can indulge in one of life’s elemental pleasures: Telling others that *they’re* doing it wrong.

QUICK FIX

You rely only on your phone for navigation. Always bring a map and compass, too. They never run out of juice.

You cut a switchback. The trail crew put the path there for a reason. Accept it, respect it.

You don’t check the forecast. Really? Go to weather.gov. Two minutes of research can save you a weekend of gear-choice regret.

You don’t seek up-to-date trail info. Ask a ranger, someone who has been there recently, or check an up-to-date online forum.



YOU DO THE HILLBILLY HANG.

Bad move: Strapping food, fuel, a sleeping pad, or jackets to the outside of your pack. You'll ruin your gear, lose it to low-hanging branches, and look like a hobo. Buy a big-enough pack and stow everything—except water bottles—inside.

MY BAD

I Got 'Skeeters Up My Skirt.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN something was wrong before I even got to the trailhead.

En route to Denali State Park, I stopped at a gas station and when I hopped out, I quickly sensed that men in skirts were not a common sight in rural Alaska. Well, I wasn't in a skirt, exactly, but the two camo-clad guys at the adjacent pump probably didn't distinguish between a hiking kilt and piece of women's clothing, and I wasn't about to explain. They looked at me like I was an extraterrestrial.

In truth, my kilt choice had started with skirts. After seeing plenty of women hiking in them, I thought, *Who doesn't want more freedom?* But even though I like to consider myself a modern man, I wasn't quite ready to shop at Lululemon. Fortunately, I didn't have to. The Mountain Hardwear Mountain Kilt was created for guys just like me. It was made of lightweight, quick-dry nylon, ended at a point just above my knees, and had pockets. Even the soft, chamois-line waistband felt like an upgrade. Perfect.

Well, perfect somewhere I'm sure, but not Alaska in summer. There was one problem with my plan. In a word: mosquitoes.

Alaska is famous for its 'skeeters, but we were far south of the Arctic's headnet country, so I figured they wouldn't be too bad. And they weren't. But you don't need swarms of mosquitoes to ruin your day when you're wearing a kilt just like the Scottish do. Really, just one biting insect will do it.

I'm sure the scenery was great that afternoon, but I can't say I recall seeing any of it. I just remember trying and failing to hold the bottom of that kilt closed. Fortunately, that didn't last all week. I hadn't done everything wrong: I packed a pair of pants, too.

—Dennis Lewon

QUICK FIX

You skimp on your sleeping pad.

Conduction—heat transfer from your warm body to the cold ground—is your enemy. Buy the best-insulating sleeping pad you can carry.

You buy the wrong-size tent.

Today's shelters are so light you should consider getting a three-person tent for two people. Way more comfortable.

You freeze in your sleeping bag.

Go for a bag that's rated at least 10 degrees below the lowest temperature you expect.

You store your headlamp with

batteries inside. They'll lose power faster. Also, if you can't lock your headlamp, flip the batteries around to prevent accidental turn-ons.

DEBATABLE

YOU USE YOUR TREKKING POLES WRONG.

Hiking with poles reduces compression on the knees by up to 25 percent on descents, and poles cut down on muscle strain and the risk of ankle injury. Shorten poles on uphill and lengthen on the downs. But what to do with those straps?

STRAPS ARE KEY!

Justin "Trauma" Lichter has hiked 35,000 miles since 2002. On the sensitive subject of wrist-strap engagement, he says, "If you go up through the strap, it cradles the base of your hand, and you can get a little extra push. It gives more stability and efficiency."

STRAPS ARE DUMB!

Guide and SAR badass Doug Chabot retorts: "If you're entwined with your wrist strap and you fall, it could wrench your arm out of its socket."

You don't know the ABCs of packing.

As a beast of burden who used to stock the Appalachian Mountain Club huts in New Hampshire, guide **Owen White** alphabetizes his loads.

Aa Accessibility

Pack from bottom to top, with the bottom being stuff you won't need until camp, and the top holding the food, drink, and layers you'll need during the day.

Bb Balance

Center heavy objects (your food bag, especially) and keep them close to your back so they don't throw you out of whack every time you take a step.

Cc Compressibility

Say no to excessive bulk. If you can't squash your insulating layer and sleeping bag into small compression sacks, it's time to upgrade.

You carry your water bottle right-side up in winter. Which part of a pond freezes first? The top! Same with your water bottle. Pack it upside-down and sip ice-free.

You buy a tasteful forest-green puffy and brown pants. Upside: You blend in. Downside: Only bright gear will get you found when your bushwack goes awry.

You sag your pack. Wearing it too low negates all that fancy suspension. Position the hipbelt so it curves around the top of your pelvis.

You sweat when it's cold out. When you stop, you'll be *really* cold, immediately. Layer down or moderate your pace—you're running too hot.

YOU THINK SURVIVAL GEAR IS CAMPING GEAR.

When it comes to function and comfort, survival stuff doesn't replace what's already in your pack.



THIS IS NOT A LIGHTER.

Making a fire like a caveman is easier said than done: A flint is useless compared with any cheap lighter you pick up at a gas station. Get two; keep them dry.



THIS IS NOT A SLEEPING BAG.

That space blanket is paper-thin, paper-strong, and about as cozy as outer space itself.



THIS IS NOT A TENT.

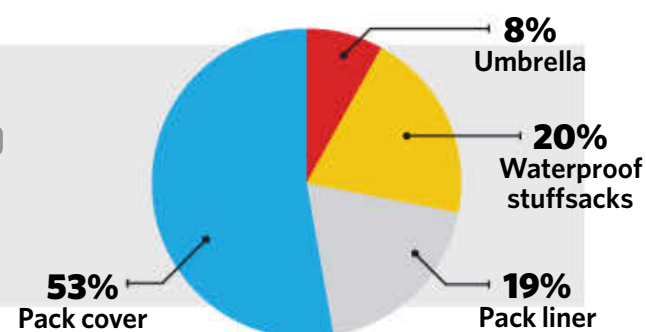
Bivy sacks weigh about the same as an ultralight tent, except that when you zip yourself into the bivy, condensation still rains on your face.



THIS IS NOT NECESSARY.

That huge, ridiculous Rambo knife you carry in a holster? Leave all 3 pounds of it at home and go for a light-weight multitool.

YOUR WAY HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR GEAR DRY?



You tie your shoelaces wrong.

My son Tyler showed me this method two decades after I taught him the other way. When I tested his technique on a Colorado hike, the old-school double-knot came undone after 3 miles. The new-school double-bunny ears version stays snug, but still unties easily. The step-by-step instructions:

1. Tie a standard starter knot like you always would.
2. Form two bunny ears. Position the left loop closer to your leg, and the right loop closer to your toes.
3. Loop the back (left) ear over the front (right) ear and back through the hole you just created. Leave it loose.
4. Loop the front ear over the half knot and out through the hole.
5. Pull both loops tight. March with confidence that you'll never have to bend over with a full pack to tie your boots again.

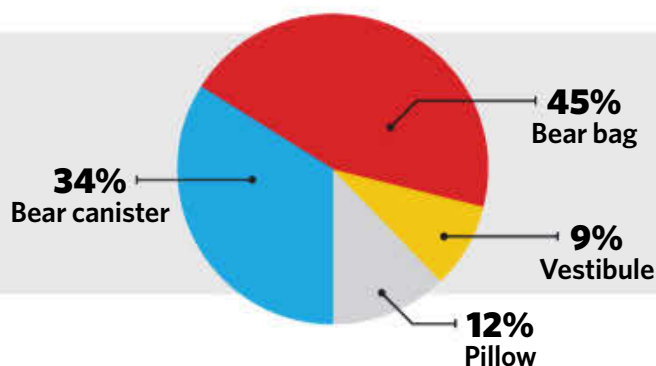




YOU ANGLE FOR THAT MEMORABLE SELFIE.

Bison, bighorn sheep, moose, coyotes, wolves, and bears don't "like" you. Even deer think you're a tool. Keep your distance.

YOUR WAY WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR FOOD AT NIGHT?



YOU UNDERESTIMATE...



MICE

You worry about bears when bigger threats are much smaller. Mice will chew a hole in your pack or tent. Store smellables in the bear canister or hang them.



MARMOTS

Consider them enormous mice. Take normal precautions, plus hang anything sweat-soaked, including packs, boots, and trekking poles (they really like the salt).



RAVENS

Your unprotected chow, nevermore. Ravens scan for food from the air, so use a beak-proof bag (like an OutSak) or container to keep your food safe from air raids.

MY BAD

I Peed on a Snake.

I STEPPED DISCRETELY behind a scrub oak in search of privacy.

It was challenging to find sneaky pee spots, away from the crew of teenage Boy Scouts I was leading on a trek in New Mexico's Philmont Scout Ranch. It required military-grade stealth and discretion.

No sooner had I started to go when I was interrupted by a sound worse than a "lost" scout. I looked down to see what my ears already knew: There was a very disgruntled, now very wet rattlesnake coiled between my feet. Had I really not looked down?

I lost my balance and toppled into the brush, shorts still suspended near my knees, rattlesnake God knows where. I tried to roll away but was tangled in my own clothes. Perhaps it was the commotion, or the Lord's name used very much in vain, that attracted the attention of my very young, very male, very Mormon crew.

The staccato shake of the rattle continued as I squirmed in the grass, barely managing to pull my shorts up so that I could at least die with dignity.

Suddenly, a loud whack, punctuated by a dull thud, and the rattle stopped. A fellow backpacking guide had—*partially*—severed the snake's head with a McCleod tool he'd grabbed from a nearby conservation work station. Another whack finished the job. My colleague knelt to retrieve the still-writhing carcass as a semi-circle of wide-eyed scouts formed around him. I scrambled to stand, brushing twigs from my hair.

The lesson? Safety has a hierarchy, and dangerous wildlife trumps modesty every single time.

—Zoë Rom

QUICK FIX

You think that fuel canister will last the whole trip. Draw a fuel gauge on your canister and you'll never wonder again: backpacker.com/fuelgauge.

Your compass is ... wrong? Unlikely. At the trailhead, don't orient your map when it's sitting on your car's hood. All that metal can confuse the needle.

You assume vacuum-sealed food doesn't smell. Maybe it doesn't to you, but a human's sense of smell is nothing compared to that of a mouse, bear, or other animal.

You see a moose and think, awwwww. Yes, they're kind of cute, but also kind of blind. They might decide to aim those dinner-plate hooves at you just in case. Give them space.

TEST YOUR WILDLIFE IQ.

Think you can read the body language of a bruin or charm the sting out of a snake? Let's see what you really know.

1. All snakebites are _____.

- a) neurotoxic.
- b) defensive.
- c) aggressive.
- d) life-threatening.

2. Fire your bear spray when the charging bear is _____.

- a) 50 feet away.
- b) 40 feet away.
- c) 30 feet away.
- d) 20 feet away.

3. Your hiking partner was just bit by a venomous snake. What's your next move?

- a) Tie a tourniquet above the wound to isolate the venom.
- b) Use my knife to cut a deep X over the wound site and start sucking out the venom.
- c) Attempt to raise his heart rate so his kidneys can process the venom faster.
- d) Keep him calm and get help.

4. If confronted, which of these should you hold eye contact with? (Choose all that apply.)

- a) Mountain lion
- b) Bear
- c) Moose
- d) Wolf

5. Which is the most successful killer of humans?

- a) Bears
- b) Mosquitoes
- c) Mountain lions
- d) Wolves

6. Which animals have the most powerful jaws?

- a) Snapping turtles
- b) Beavers
- c) Grizzly bears
- d) Mountain lions

7. True/False: Menstruating women attract bears.

- a) True b) False

8. Howling along with wolves tells them:

- a) I'm scared
- b) I'm scary
- c) I'm here
- d) Absolutely nothing

9. A bear's sense of smell is _____ more powerful than a person's.

- a) 100 times
- b) 500 times
- c) 1,000 times
- d) 2,000 times

10. Mice can spread which diseases? (Choose all that apply.)

- a) Influenza
- b) Hanta virus
- c) Lyme disease
- d) Encephalitis

11. True/false: Peeing a perimeter around your tent will

keep predators at bay.

- a) True b) False

12. When a deer screams it means:

- a) It's scared
- b) It's angry
- c) It's looking for love
- d) Any of these

HOW'D YOU DO?

10-12 correct: Top of the food chain.

7-9 correct: You know just enough to stay safe.

3-6 correct: You know just enough to get hurt.

0-3 correct: Bring a friend you can outrun.

Answer key: 1. b; 2. c; 3. d; 4. a & d; 5. b; 6. c; 7. b; 8. c; 9. d; 10. b & c; 11. b; 12. d

You think baby rattlers are deadlier than mature ones. A study of envenomations in California puts the "baby rattlers inject more venom" myth to rest; bigger means badder.

You think that coiled pit viper is sleeping. Nope! It's getting ready to strike—rattlers can strike one-third to one-half the length of their bodies.

You cook in the tent vestibule while wearing the clothes you'll sleep in. And all a grizzly can think is, "Mmmm. Tamales."

You start your adventure when the sun has already risen. On a long (or risky) hike that may take more hours than daylight, start fresh in the dark and finish tired in the light.

You pack a lot of received wisdom for bears when you only need to know three things.

Black bear, grizzly bear—doesn't matter which it is, you should behave in the same way, according to Larimer County, Colorado, wildlife manager Ty Petersburg.

1. Scare them. You know another name for bear bells? Dinner bells. Yell or sing to let bears know you're around.

2. Confront them. You already know the part about standing your ground and using your windbreaker or puffy to look huge. Also make sure you leave your tent to drive off curious bruins, otherwise they may try to join you through the side panel.

3. Repel them. When bears stand and sniff the air, they're just checking things out. But when they crouch, woof, and charge, they mean business. Deploy bear spray as soon as the animal is within the range.



All of this is true for mountain lions, too.

YOU THINK A TICK CHECK IS SUFFICIENT.

Disease-carrying deer ticks are as tiny as a grain of salt. Pre-treat your socks and shorts with permethrin before you head out (and do a tick check in camp, focusing on the backs of your knees, groin, waistband, and head).

YOU THINK A FIRE IS ENOUGH TO DRIVE OFF MOSQUITOES.

It's called a smudge fire, and it only really works if your head is directly in the thick, sticky, green-wood smoke. Instead, use DEET and a headnet to foil the swarm's would-be blood meal.



Your “I’m dying” video is blubbery and ridiculous.

That wrong turn really snowballed on you, didn’t it? But before you go to that great basecamp in the sky, think of your legacy. The internet outlives us all. Protect your rep with tips from TBA Outdoors.

Make it relatable. Could’ve happened to anyone, right? Seize the narrative before you’re labelled just another “underprepared hiker” and everyone goes nuts in the comments section about how you put SAR lives at risk.

Evoke emotions. If you can’t do that while dying, holster that iPhone.

Keep filming. You have no cell service and have to use that battery for something. Who knows? Attempting to nail that perfect Scorsese ending could be your reason to live.

DEBATABLE

TO TREAT OR NOT TO TREAT

Facts: No one wants to get sick from bad water and no one likes treating it. Multiple studies confirm that most—but not all—the backcountry water in this country is pretty safe. So how to manage that tiny risk?

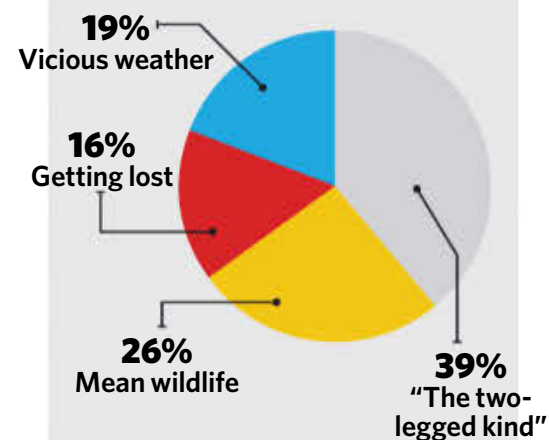
TREAT EVERY TIME.

As a child, I suffered a severe bout of gastrointestinal distress in the Adirondacks. As an adult, I came back from a hiking trip in Asia with a stomach parasite. Anyone who doesn’t treat water is basically a lucky idiot.
—Eli Bernstein

TREATING IS A WASTE OF TIME.

Confession: I don’t treat water. And I’ve never gotten sick. As long as you steer clear of livestock and stick to sources with minimal human impact, the wilderness water in the U.S. is really good. Pick your spots and drink up. —Maren Horjus

YOUR WAY WHAT’S YOUR BIGGEST TRAIL FEAR?



YOU DIDN'T TIE A STOPPER KNOT.

It takes 10 seconds and ensures you can’t rappel off the end of your rope—making it perhaps the best time investment in the outdoors. Use the half fisherman’s knot, which doesn’t require a lot of rope to tie, and won’t slide. On dual-strand rappels, tie stopper knots on both sides. Master it at backpacker.com/fishermansknot, then learn all the most important ones at backpacker.com/knotscourse.

QUICK FIX

You don’t tell anyone where you’re going. Leave your trip plan with a responsible party back home. List trails and itinerary, and what to do if you don’t return on time.

You allow the group pace to make you miserable. Nobody wants to slow the group down or be the first to complain. Screw that. Speak up if you need to stop.

You don’t set (or you ignore) a turn-back time. You didn’t read *Into Thin Air*? Another mistake.

You are too eager to hit the trail. Check your essentials list—and trail info—twice before you leave home.

You don't know the ABCs of first-aid.

When disaster strikes, rely on this simple plan to kick-start the lifesaving process and assess injuries.

Aa Airway

Check for blockages in the throat, and, absent cause for a cranial-spinal injury, adjust the head so it's in a normal resting position.

Bb Breathing

Is the victim drawing breath? Put your hand under the victim's nose to feel for heat. Or stick a mirror or knife blade under there to check for vapor.

Cc Circulation

Check for a pulse in the neck and in injured limbs above and below the wound. Sign up for our first-aid class: backpacker.com/wildernessfirstaid.

You ignore storm signs. Southern winds. Plunging barometric pressure (buy that altimeter watch). Descend to safety. Now.

You stow a full hydration bladder in your pack and throw it in the trunk. You'll risk a rupture and flood. Also, leave a jug of water in your car for when you return.

You separate your group. It isn't a party—or safe for that matter—if you're not together.

You overestimate your pace. Plan to average 2 mph max, plus 30 minutes for every 1,000 feet of elevation gain.

MY BAD

I Trusted My Partner's Memory.

ABOVE TREELINE IN one of those snow-and-rock scenes where the TV shows play the ominous music is no place to lose your head. Pakistan's Nanga Parbat is not nicknamed "Killer Mountain" ironically. But we'd done our homework—or so we thought.

One member of our team had climbed Nanga Parbat seven years before, and he remembered fixed ropes that would aid our downclimb. You can forgive us for thinking, after we summited victorious, that maybe the hardest part was over. Except, a lot had changed on the summit since my team member was last there. Those fixed ropes? Nowhere to be seen. So there we were, not 100 percent certain it was even possible to climb down this particular ridge. I couldn't help but wonder how we'd gotten this high without being sure how we'd get back.

Time to panic, right?

Five miles high in the literal Death Zone is not a great time to obsess over mistakes or launch into finger-pointing recriminations. Yes, we had our little freak-out moment, but then were able to shift our attention to saving ourselves. We stopped and took 10 breaths—two seconds in, two seconds out—to switch out of flight-fight mode and allow the brain's executive function to reboot and take over. Then we slowly made our way back to safety, one pitch—sometimes one move—at a time.

Things go wrong in the mountains. Weather changes. Falls happen. Rocks slide. But one thing that should never go wrong is your pre-trip research. There is no way to be too cautious with the information your life will depend on. Our failure to confirm that the fixed ropes were still in place nearly killed us. And if, despite your best efforts, you are still surprised, now you know how to stop the panic and stay in control. —Doug Chabot

You're crossing that stream wrong.

1. Water check: If the stream is rushing (or, honestly, moving faster than you can walk) and water level is above your knees, find a safer place to cross or change your route.



2. Pack check: Whether it's calm, deep water or a shallow-but-swift river, unbuckle your hipbelt and sternum strap so you can quickly ditch the pack if you lose your footing (otherwise it'll pull you under).



3. Footwear check: Keeping your boots dry is fine, but don't go barefoot. Cross in your camp shoes, or pull out your boot insoles, strap them to your feet with duct tape, or roll your socks over them.



4. Buddy check: The stronger the flow, the more important it is to link up as a team. Two hikers should hook elbows. Three should make a triangle. Groups should form a conga line. The strongest goes first.



YOU PACKED THE WHOLE MEDICINE CABINET.

Don't let a heavy med kit weigh you down—or lull you into a false sense of security. For low-risk weekend trips, slim one down to its essentials (plus prescriptions) and learn how to improvise the rest.



PACK

1. Alcohol prep pads
2. Antibiotic ointment
3. Medical tape
4. Bandages
5. Tweezers
6. Antihistamine
7. Ibuprofen
8. Moleskin
9. Nail scissors

DITCH

10. Medical shears: You only need the nail scissors.
11. Tincture of benzoin: Duct tape is a better adhesive.
12. Aspirin: Ibuprofen is easier on the stomach.
13. Thermometer: Use a hand on the forehead.

IMPROVISE

14. Splint Grab something long and rigid (like a trekking or tent pole), arrange the injured limb in a comfortable position, and secure the pole to the limb using medical tape or cloth. Immobilize joints on both sides of the injury.

15. Hemostatic gauze Fact: Pressure stops bleeding. Use anything absorbent and press firmly on a bleeding wound. If the material becomes

saturated, add another on top (never remove layers).

16. Elastic bandage Snugly wrap a (stretchy) T-shirt around the affected joint.

17. Water syringe A fast-moving jet of water is useful for cleaning wounds. Fill a plastic bag with clean water and snip off a bottom corner. Squeeze the bag and direct the stream into the injury.

QUICK FIX

You take shortcuts. Also known as "getting lost."

You hike with your head down. Footing is important, but you're missing all the views and navigation landmarks. Slow down.

You shake dry after peeing. Shake dry isn't really dry. Instead, use a pee cloth, like the Kula Cloth (\$20; kulacloth.com), which wicks up whiz and lets it evaporate.

You camel a liter of water before you leave camp. It won't hurt you, but it won't hydrate you for the long haul. Instead, sip a few ounces every 15 minutes to optimize absorption.

MY BAD

I Didn't Ask for Help.

NOTHING BAD WOULD happen on my first multi-week trip at age 15. I was full of teenage confidence, even though I'd never camped more than four nights in a row. Experience? That was a tiny detail when facing the prospect of true freedom in the Quebecois wilderness with a group from the camp I'd been attending for years. I'd finally made it to the big time.

So when I got a bug bite on my foot, I wasn't about to show any signs of weakness. I scratched it until it stung, stuck it back in my river-soaked KEENs, and moved along with my coming-of-age story. A few days went on, and so did the itch. By day, I pretended all was OK, gripping harder on my paddle to forget the fester, letting my mind engage the scenery. In the privacy of my sleeping bag at night, however, I attacked that itch like an eagle on a trout.

It wasn't long before an angry infection spread across the inside of my foot, reaching its little red tentacles over the arch. I was mortified. If there's one thing a wilderness-bound teenager doesn't want—even more than appearing weak—it's any kind of creeping, oozing skin thing. It was time to come clean.

That night, I was the star of evening med-kit rounds and recipient of a tut-tutting from our counselors. Yes, it was wrong to assume an injury would heal if it was wet all day; it was wrong to conceal my worsening situation; it was wrong to let optimism overtake realism. But at the core, if your body isn't healthy, neither is your trip. I was able to fix my foot with regular care and wore my bandages like badges of honor. Ultimately, I was lucky, and now I never wait for small injuries to become big ones. —Zoe Gates

You skip breakfast. Welcome to Bonk Town, population you. Your body burns carbs to sustain moderate exercise. No carbs, no vroom.

You eat a huge lunch. You indulged to fuel up for a big climb. And now you feel lethargic. Snack often—it's better to feed the furnace throughout the day.

You don't add enough water to your dinner. That semi-reconstituted food is going to pull moisture from your body instead, potentially resulting in an upset stomach.

You forget that water boils at a lower temp at high altitude. Add at least 10 minutes to rehydration times when you're above 8,000 feet. Basic physics (trust us).



You're not taking care of your feet.

From buying boots to treating blisters, here's how it's done.

You wear the wrong socks. They should fit like second skin. No bagging. No irritating seams. No cotton. No skin touching boot material.

You let your socks get nasty. In dry conditions, have one pair on your feet and a clean pair to sleep in. Wash your dirty socks in the evening and let them dry during the day. In wet weather, add a third pair to allow time for the wash/dry cycle.

Your toenails are turning black. If you're jamming your tootsies into the front of your boots, trim your toenails, snug up your laces, and try thinner socks.

You don't have camp shoes. Wet shoes can weaken foot skin and breed fungus like trench foot. Let your dogs breathe and let your shoes dry out. Swallow your pride and buy some Crocs.

You can't feel your toes. Loosen your laces and buy new shoes as soon as you can. Most numb toes come back online, eventually.

You don't tape trouble spots. If your feet are prone to blisters, invest a few cents in medical tape and preempt the problem. Sweaty feet? Use duct tape.

You got a blister anyway. To drain one safely, sterilize the site and your lancing utensil (hand sanitizer for the former; flame for the latter), puncture a few spots near the blister's edge, apply antiseptic ointment, surround the sore spot with a moleskin doughnut, and cover the assembly with a nonstick bandage.

You neglect your sore feet. Everyone's dogs bark after a few long days. Take care of your most important gear: In camp,

fight inflammation by elevating your feet and taking ibuprofen. And if there's an icy stream nearby, give them a good soak.

YOU SHOP WRONG.

- **Shop for boots at the end of the day,** when your feet are swollen, and bring the socks you'll hike in.
- **Try on multiple brands to get the best fit.** Your heels should be snug, your toes should not.
- **Match your boots to your pack weight and terrain.** Lighter is generally better, as long as you have appropriate support and protection.
- **Give them a vigorous test-scramper indoors to ensure they're the right boots for you.** Use an incline board to check that there's no uphill or downhill sliding.

You're taking a dump wrong.



The Doo-Dos

1. Go at least 200 feet from water, trails, or campsites.
2. Dig a 6-inch-deep cathole or trench.
3. Squat over your hole (it's surprisingly easy to aim) with your weight on the balls of your feet. Rest your haunches on your heels if you're coordinated enough—the last thing you want is quivering quads when you're mid-biz. Grab a tree trunk or branch for balance.
4. Bury your TP (still LNT-approved!) and cover it with the dirt you excavated. Better: Use a "natural TP" like snow, a smooth rock, or a leaf (and bury that, too).
5. Wash your hands with soap. Every time.



The Doo-Don'ts

1. Burning your TP can spark a wildfire. Bury it instead or pack it out.
2. Rocks and sticks are no match for trowels when it comes to digging.
3. No soil, no free-range poo. (Dirt digests the droppings.) That goes for deserts, canyons, tundra, scree, talus (hard no to pooping on a rock and shot-putting it), snow, and water trips. Use a WAG bag instead.
4. Never crap in a slope's main drainage, no matter how far you are from the actual water. Can't hold it? WAG it.
5. Hand sanitizer is not enough. Alcohol-based, leave-on hand sanitizers can't clean up messes.

QUICK
FIX

You only pack sweet snacks. Don't neglect the salt. Your body needs electrolytes. (Plus, no variety in the snack bag leads to food fatigue, which leads to bonking.)

You let someone reach into your gorp bag. Gross! You don't know where those hands have been (see above). When sharing food, pour it out.

You sleep naked. Skinny-sleepers offload sweat and body oils, which diminish a bag's loft, so they need to wash theirs more often. Baselayers make the best PJs.

You forget stuff. Make a laminated packing list—one for dayhikes, another for backpacking trips. Run through your checklist before you head out.

YOUR FOOD TASTES LIKE NOTHING.

Spices are basically weightless. Start with one teaspoon of each spice or herb, and tweak according to taste.

Sweet Cinnamon + nutmeg + maple granules + ground cloves



Savory Onion/garlic powder + dried parsley + dry mustard + pepper



Hot Ground habañoero chiles + chili powder + smoked salt + ground pepper



The spice is wrong? Buy prepackaged, like Mural of Flavor or Sunny Paris blends at penzeys.com.



seek **THE** peak

MOUNT WASHINGTON
SUPPORTING OBSERVATORY



MW OBS

MOUNT WASHINGTON OBSERVATORY

GATHER IN THE
WHITE MOUNTAINS OF NH
JULY 19-20, 2019



THE NATION'S PREMIER HIKING EVENT

& VENDOR EXPO SATURDAY, JULY 20TH – ANCHORED BY:

**EASTERN
MOUNTAIN
SPORTS®**

BACKPACKER *Tour*
GET OUT MORE



**Mt. Washington
Auto Road**

Obōz
FOOTWEAR

SEEKTHEPEAK.ORG

(603) 356-2137 x231 or kfraser@mountwashington.org

WITH SUPPORT FROM
Mount Washington Radio Group
Mason & Mason Insurance
FirstLight
White Mountain Oil & Propane
Martini Northern
NorthConwayLodging.com

Map from AMC's *White Mountain Guide*, 29th Edition, 2012.
Reprinted by permission of Appalachian Mountain Club Books.

You're a selfish partner.

We get it. Backpacking can be exhausting—more so if you're busy resenting your trip buddy because the group gear division is unequal or inefficient.



YOUR PACK



THE EQUALIZER



YOUR PARTNER'S PACK

QUICK FIX

You post location details on Instagram. Giving exact directions to a stunning spot advances the doomsday clock.

You leave hot embers glowing when you go to sleep. If you can't spare water to do this right, don't make a fire. No excuses on this one.

You stay inside when the weather sucks. Gear up and get out there.

You gear up for your fears. If you pack less, you'll experience more.

You're a jerk.



1. You pass like a rolling stone. If you're going downhill with gravity assist, yield to the exhausted strivers schlepping up.

2. You don't say "hi." We love wilderness solitude, too, but other hikers are great for trail intel. Plus, don't be rude.

3. You don't yield the right of way. Bikers yield to hikers; hikers yield to horses; horses are still king.

DEBATABLE

SOLO VS. GROUP

Either way, you could be doing it wrong. Pick your priorities depending on your social style and your distaste for the downsides.

PARTY OF ONE

Mark Jenkins, a frequent solo adventurer, cites John Muir and Henry David Thoreau, who never waited up for anybody, used their alone time to reflect, and then turned it into tomes that still resonate today. Not a thinker? More practically, you'll be open to meeting more people once you get sick of yourself; and you'll never have an argument over pace, what time to wake up, who's carrying more group gear, or when/where to camp. Bonus: You'll get all the leftovers.

LET'S HAVE A PARTY.

Travelling with a group or a trail family lets you balance skills, says serial thru-hiker **Liz "Snorkel" Thomas**. If you're good with navigation, recruit a cook and a pack mule to make a solid team. Having friends to share the experience with makes memories stronger, and dividing group gear makes everyone feel stronger. And if and when your group starts to grate on you, look to the lessons of history for reasons to stay together: Aron Ralston liked to go it alone, too.

MY BAD

I Led a Death March.

FEW SPOTS IN Colorado come into their own around Memorial Day quite like Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (see page 96). It's a place that's easy to get excited about, which meant it was easy to rally a big group to join me for a birthday hike.

As the most experienced person—and the birthday boy—I became the leader, planning the route, helping people with their gear, selling the trip as a fun two-nighter. I maybe—*maybe*—forgot to mention that hiking in deep sand is, well, hard.

About 3 miles into the second day, we crested a small berm onto the dunefield proper, and the wind was blowing hard enough to depilate our legs down to baby skin. I was alone in my awe—and alone in packing the bandana that I put on everyone's list. Soon moist sand was gathering around mouths. For whatever reason, wind dredges up emotions more than any other type of weather. Might be the way it robs you of a moment's peace, all the while isolating you when it's blowing too hard to yell over.

So perhaps it was no surprise that the group disintegrated into couples and spread out. Over the last mile to camp, I watched as one person would stagger a few feet and kneel. At least it was easy to blame the tears on blowing sand.

At some point, I sped to camp so I could backtrack and offer to porter. No one would even look at me. Who could blame them? My list of bad moves was long: I trusted novices to understand what they were getting into, thought stoke trumped truth, and, when it came down to it, abandoned the weak.

You never heard a more morose rendition of "Happy Birthday" in a more beautiful place.

—Casey Lyons

SUMMER
FESTIVAL



PACIFIC CREST TRAIL DAYS

CASCADE LOCKS, OR
AUGUST 16-18, 2019

design: tnbd.net

TITLE
SPONSORS



HEADLINE
SPONSORS

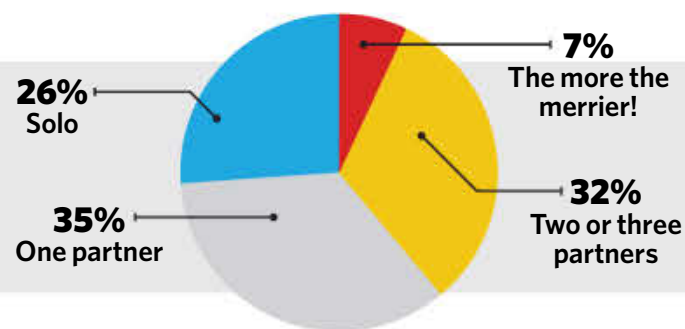


GEAR EXPO & SALE • CAMPING • MOVIES • RAFFLE • ACTIVITIES • PCTDAYS.COM

QUICK FIX

You only learn the hard way.
Experience can be a cruel—and slow—teacher. Study up before you start.

YOUR TURN WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE GROUP SIZE?



You try to carry the whole group.

Shannon Rochelle, research manager and field instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School, has a few theories about why no one wants to follow you anymore.

You fail to define the trip and get everyone's buy-in.

In your exhilaration over the pending assault on Peak X, you might have left questions about key priorities unanswered, such as:

- *Is this trip only about bagging the peak?*
- *Is it also about having a great time outdoors?*
- *What's the group's ability and tolerance for risk?*

Successful leaders get the group to answer—and agree on—these key questions. Next job: Sticking with the answers.

You make group decisions by yourself.

A good leader insists that, before any big decisions are made, everyone's opinion is heard.

You let the group make "leader" decisions.

Exception to the previous rule: When somebody sprains an ankle and thunder is rumbling overhead, democracy means you're doing it wrong. Time for benevolent dictatorship. "Mary, you help Dan walk. Tony, you make sure we stay on the trail. I'll carry Dan's pack. We'll stop at timberline."

You try to solve all your hiking companion's problems.

She's hurting. He's worried. Shelve the solutions, and encourage her to vent. Explore his fears. Sometimes being heard is all they need. You can strategize later.

You're a cheerleader instead of a hike leader.

Cut the mindless rah-rah and offer a hot drink, a snack, and a mental break to the hikers who need it.

You tell them what to do rather than doing it.

A good example is always more powerful than a lecture. 🗣️

HARBOR FREIGHT

QUALITY TOOLS AT RIDICULOUSLY LOW PRICES

1,000+ Stores Nationwide • HarborFreight.com

PREDATOR. BEATS HONDA.

2000 WATT SUPER QUIET INVERTER GENERATOR

SUPER COUPON
Customer Rating
★★★★★



PREDATOR 2000
NOW \$449.99
SAVE \$559

4.7 HOURS	RUN-TIME	3.4 HOURS
2000	MAX. STARTING WATTS	2000
1600	RUNNING WATTS	1600
61 dB	NOISE LEVEL	59 dB
48 LBS.	WEIGHT	45.6 LBS.
1.2 GAL	TANK SIZE	.95 GAL
3	OUTLETS	3
YES	OVERLOAD PROTECTION	YES
79.7 cc	ENGINE SIZE	90.5 cc
YES	LOW OIL ALERT	YES
YES	PARALLEL CAPABLE	YES
YES	POWER SAVER	YES



HONDA EU2000i

*HONDA EU2000i stated specs

PRICE \$1,009

ITEM 62523

83061030

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

FREE

OVER 5,000
5 STAR REVIEWS

**SUPER BRIGHT LED/SMD
WORK LIGHT/FLASHLIGHT**

- Super-Strong, Ultra-Lightweight Composite Plastic
- Magnetic Base & 360° Swivel Hook for Hands-Free Operation
- 3-AAA Batteries (included)
- 144 Lumens

**ALL IN A SINGLE
SUPER POWERFUL LIGHT**

COMPARE TO PERFORMANCE TOOL

MODEL: 82264

83060032



ITEM 63878/63991/64005/69567
60566/63601/67227 shown

Cannot be used with other discounts or prior purchases. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 11/2/19 while supplies last. Limit 1 FREE GIFT per customer per day.

20% OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM*



Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Parking Lot Sale item, compressors, floor jacks, sales, saw mills, storage cabinets, electric air tools, trailers, brand-new tools, welders, Admiral Ames, Boser, Coker, CoverPro, Dayton, Diamondback, Earthquake, Fischer, Hercules, Ikon, Jupiter, Lynx, Pwlan, Predator, Tailgator, Viking, Valcan, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 11/2/19.

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating
★★★★★

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 6" ALL PURPOSE/WEATHER RESISTANT TARP



COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK MODEL: BG8X10-Y
ITEM 69115/69121/69129/69137/69249/877 shown

NOW \$299
SAVE \$499

83062169

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

PITTSBURGH #1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON STEEL HEAVY DUTY LOW PROFILE FLOOR JACK



ITEM 64264/64266/64879/64881
61282/68049/62326/61253 shown

83062772

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

Apache WEATHERPROOF MODEL 9800 PROTECTIVE RIFLE CASE

Customer Rating
★★★★★

- 50-3/8" L
- 13-5/8" W
- 5-1/8" H



COMPARE TO PELICAN MODEL: DOUBLE RIFLE
ITEM 64520 Case contents and locks not included.

83062885

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

YUKON 46" MOBILE STORAGE CABINET WITH SOLID WOOD TOP

Customer Rating
★★★★★

- 1200 lb. capacity



COMPARE TO FRONTIER MODEL: XTB4602B
ITEM 64023/64012 shown

83064825

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

SUPER COUPON

TACTICAL AMMO/UTILITY BOX



COMPARE TO FLAMBEAU MODEL: 1409
ITEM 64113

83065211

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

CENTECH AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER



COMPARE TO SCHUMACHER ELECTRIC MODEL: SC1
ITEM 69955/64284/42292 shown

83065736

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

GOOD CENTRAL PNEUMATIC 8 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR



COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: 3000-0
ITEM 40400 69667/95386 68740 shown

83066926

LIMIT 2 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

BETTER MCGRAW 8 GALLON OIL-FREE AIR COMPRESSOR



COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: 2600-0
ITEM 56269 64294 shown

71393252

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

SUPER COUPON

20-60 x 60mm SPOTTING SCOPE WITH TRIPOD



COMPARE TO CELESTRON MODEL: 14593491
ITEM 62774

83067316

LIMIT 2 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

PITTSBURGH 1000 LB. CAPACITY STEEL MOTORCYCLE LIFT

- Lift range: 7" to 29-1/2"
- Weighs 269 lbs.



COMPARE TO DIRECT-LIFT MODEL: 873100
ITEM 69904/68892 shown

83067777

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

UNION PERSONAL PORTABLE SECURITY SAFE

- Meets TSA guidelines



COMPARE TO STACK-ON MODEL: IK-233131
ITEM 64079 Contents not included.

83069970

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

COVERPRO 10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE



COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC MODEL: 76377
ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown

83069972

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

SUPER COUPON

HEAVY DUTY FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR



COMPARE TO COLEMAN MODEL: 2000020293
ITEM 62314/63066/66383 shown

83070210

LIMIT 2 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

SUPER COUPON

200 LUMENS LED SUPER BRIGHT FLIP LIGHT



COMPARE TO PREMIER MODEL: SW-SWITCH-12/24
ITEM 64189/64723/63922 shown

83070611

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

BADLAND ZXR 12,000 LB. TRUCK/SUV WINCH

- Weighs 83.65 lbs.
- 21" L x 10-1/8" H



COMPARE TO WARN MODEL: 96820
ITEM 64045/64046/63770 shown

83071026

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

HARDY MECHANIC'S GLOVES



COMPARE TO VALEO MODEL: 25521
ITEM 62434, 62426, 62433, 62432, 62429, 64178, 64179, 62428 shown

83071430

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 11/2/19*

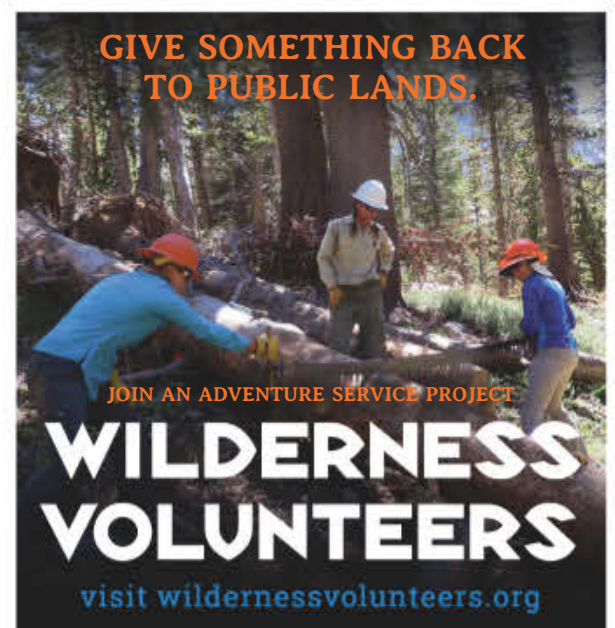
*Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 11/2/19.

At Harbor Freight Tools, the "Compare to" price means that the specified comparison, which is an item with the same or similar function, was advertised for sale at or above the "Compare to" price by another national retailer in the U.S. within the past 90 days. Prices advertised by others may vary by location. No other meaning of "Compare to" should be implied. For more information, go to HarborFreight.com or see store associate.



Ignite YOUR ADVENTURE

A Guide For Outdoor Gear & Travel



BACKPACKER FUEL ZONE

ADVERTISEMENT



You worked hard for that summit view.

Let us take it from here. Our handmade meals are what adventurers turn to for calorie-dense sustenance made from clean ingredients. Just add water in minutes you'll have a delicious meal. Gluten-free and Vegan options available. goodto-go.com



Fuel Made Simple™

For years, similar waffles have been sold on street corners throughout Europe and eaten by professional cyclists, so we decided to create our own by sandwiching honey between two thin waffles. Honey Stinger Organic Waffles are easy to digest, certified organic and available in a single-serving wrapper. honeystinger.com





**VERSA
CLIMBER**

BUILD YOUR OUTDOOR CARDIO

EXTEND YOUR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES WITH VERSACLIMBER. VERTICAL CARDIO OFFERS UNIQUE, EFFECTIVE TOTAL BODY TRAINING THAT BUILDS A STRONG HEART AND LUNGS. GO FARTHER, LONGER, AND HIGHER WITH VERSACLIMBER.

1.800.237.2271 VERSACLIMBER.com



Laser Measured
FLOORLINER™

Ultimate protection against spilled coffee, dirty shoes and muddy messes. Our custom-fit FloorLiners™ keep messes away from your vehicle's floor and save you time when cleaning. Easy to install, a vehicle lifesaver in minutes!



Available in Black, Tan and Grey
(Cocoa Available for Select Applications)



Front FloorLiner™



No-Drill MudFlaps

Laser Measured, No-Drill MudFlaps are custom-fit to protect your vehicle's fenders and exterior from rocks, mud, road grime and other debris.



Seat Protector

Water-repellent seat cover that protects against scratches, damage and spills.



CarCoasters®

The coasters sit in the bottom of drink holders to help catch drips and messes. Easily removed when it is time to clean.

See these products and much more at

WeatherTech®.com

Order Now: 800-441-6287



American Customers
WeatherTech.com



Canadian Customers
WeatherTech.ca



European Customers
WeatherTech.eu

Accessories Available for: Acura • Alfa Romeo • Aston Martin • Audi • BMW • Buick • Cadillac • Chevrolet • Chrysler • Dodge • Ferrari • Fiat • Ford • Genesis • GMC • Honda • Hummer • Hyundai • Infiniti • Isuzu • Jaguar • Jeep • Kia • Land Rover • Lexus • Lincoln • Maserati • Mazda • Mercedes-Benz • Mercury • Mini • Mitsubishi • Nissan • Oldsmobile • Plymouth • Pontiac • Porsche • RAM • Saab • Saturn • Scion • Smart • Subaru • Suzuki • Tesla • Toyota • Volkswagen • Volvo and more!



MADE IN USA

© 2019 by MacNeil IP LLC



ignite



Windy Devil Pass

CECIL D. ANDRUS-WHITE CLOUDS WILDERNESS, IDAHO

Stargaze in solitude by an alpine tarn at this remote campsite.

MILKY WAY

Bring your binoculars: Windy Devil Pass is located smack in the middle of the huge Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve. (Find more prime stargazing spots starting on page 94.)

CASTLE PEAK

A photo of this craggy, 11,814-foot peak helped persuade Congress to protect the area around it as the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in 1972.

UNNAMED PEAK
10,800 feet

ANTARES

At 700 times the sun's diameter, this red supergiant is the brightest star in the Scorpio constellation. Spot it in the southern sky during summer.

GET HERE

With 9,000 feet of elevation change over 22.4 miles, this three-day out-and-back is a leg-burner. From the Little Boulder Creek trailhead, follow the path through sagebrush desert. Climb through aspen-speckled meadows (stay on the lookout for

moose) to the Boulder Chain Lakes, a series of crystal-clear ponds. Pitch your tent near Hatchet Lake at mile 8. Day two, work your way through the peak-lined valley and up a series of switchbacks as you crest 10,000-foot Windy Devil Pass. Drop .4 mile down to reach this secluded spot by a small alpine

pond. Next day (or the day after), retrace your steps to the trailhead.

DO IT

TRAILHEAD 44.0844, -114.4503 **SEASON** July to October **PERMIT** None; sign in at the trailhead **CONTACT** bit.do/windydevil

BACKPACKER (ISSN 0277-867X USPS 509-490) is published six times a year with combined issues in Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/Jun and Sep/Oct for six issues (Jan/Feb, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December) by Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc., an Active Interest Media company. The known office of publication is 5720 Flatiron Parkway, Boulder, CO 80301. Subscriptions are \$19.98 per year in the U.S., \$29.98 in Canada, \$41.98 elsewhere (surface mail). Periodicals postage paid at Boulder, CO and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BACKPACKER, PO Box 37274, Boone, IA 50037-0274. GST#8256424911. BACKPACKER publications, including GearFinder®, Waypoints®, and Adventure Travel®, are registered trademarks of Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc. © 2019 Cruz Bay Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Volume 47, Issue 358, Number 5, July/August 2019. Subscribers: If the postal authorities alert us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within 2 years. To remove your name from promotional lists, write to Backpacker Subscription Services, PO Box 37274, Boone, IA 50037-0274.

PHOTO BY NICK LAKE / TANDEMSTOCK.COM
TEXT BY DAVID GLEISNER.

Our most adventurous Outback[®] yet.



The 2019 Subaru Outback. It's loaded with versatility for those who love to chase adventure. Fold-away roof cross bars. A 60/40-split folding rear seat. And standard Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive + 32 mpg.* **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**



Outback. Well-equipped at \$26,345.[†]

Subaru and Outback are registered trademarks. *EPA-estimated highway fuel economy for 2019 Subaru Outback 2.5i models. Actual mileage may vary. †MSRP excludes destination and delivery charges, tax, title, and registration fees. Retailer sets actual price. Certain equipment may be required in specific states, which can modify your MSRP. See your retailer for details. 2019 Subaru Outback 2.5i Limited shown has an MSRP of \$34,995. Vehicle shown with accessory equipment.



More MEAT

— for your dog's wild side —

Satisfy your dog's natural instinct with meat-rich, grain-free BLUE Wilderness – inspired by the diet of wolves, and created for pet parents who want to feed high-quality, healthy ingredients.

Love them like family. Feed them like family.®



MEAT-RICH ~ HIGH PROTEIN ~ GRAIN-FREE